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# SERMONS

PREACHED ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS,

AT THE WEST LONDON SYNAGOGUE
OF BRITISH JEWS,

BY

THE REV. D. W. MARKS,

MINISTER OF THE CONGREGATION.

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Published at the Request of the Council of Founders.

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The publication of this Volume of Sermons, undertaken at the request of the Council of Founders, is intended to accomplish the twofold purpose—first, of furnishing Jewish families with the means of *home* instruction in matters that appertain to the essentials of the Mosaic faith; and secondly, of setting forth a fair exposition of the doctrines which are taught in our synagogue. The dearth of Jewish discourses in the English language, which thwarts the laudable intentions of those who are disposed to promote religious instruction in their families, cannot but plead in favour of the determination taken by the Council of Founders, how imperfect soever these sermons may be deemed. The ritual changes which have been introduced in our synagogue have, from various causes, led to misrepresentations concerning our opinions and practices; and in no simpler way can a denial be given to the unfounded statements which have been advanced, than by the publication of a number of discourses in which the doctrines uniformly urged upon the attention of the congregants are fully and plainly declared.

It will be seen from the nature of some of the sermons contained in this volume, that I have

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considered it incumbent upon me to give occasional instruction from the pulpit to the youthful members of my congregation, on the prophetical portions of the Scriptures, concerning which a difference of opinion prevails between us and our non-Jewish brethren. But in endeavouring to discharge this duty of a faithful pastor of a Hebrew congregation, I am convinced that, wittingly, I have not uttered a word that could be considered disrespectful towards any religious body or system differing from that faith which we Jews have inherited from our ancestors, and earnestly desire to transmit to our posterity.

May the Lord, whose mercy endureth for ever, and whose paternal kindness extendeth to all His children, of every clime and of every creed, vouchsafe speedily, and in our days, to pour out the spirit of love and forbearance upon all men; that they may be taught by Him, and that they may walk in the ways of His holy law—the ways of peace.

*Margaret-street, Cavendish-square,*
*London, June* 1851 (*A.M.* 5611).

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# SERMONS.

## I.

DISCOURSE DELIVERED AT THE CONSECRATION OF THE "WEST LONDON SYNAGOGUE OF BRITISH JEWS," ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 27TH, 5602.

THE first solemn act, constituting us a "congregation of Jacob," has this day been performed. We have consecrated our Synagogue to the worship of the Lord God of our fathers, to be henceforward, we trust, a beacon of light, and a secure haven to the sons of Israel; and we have invoked a blessing on our house of prayer, and upon all those who, with devout and grateful hearts, approach these precincts to seek the divine protection. With these sacred sounds still in our ears, it might be well for us to retire to our homes, there to meditate on the goodness of *Him*, who has been with us in all our labours, suffered us to triumph over many difficulties, and permitted us to witness this day, the realization of our fondest hopes.

But a most important duty yet remains to be fulfilled: it is to develop to you, and through you to the whole Jewish community, the reasons why, and

the principles on which, this Temple of Prayer has been instituted. This full exposition I now gladly make; for whilst I feel that we are discharging our conscientious obligations to Him, בוחן לבות וכליות "Who trieth the heart and the reins;"[1] I nevertheless hold it right to place the principles by which we shall be guided so clearly before our brethren, that no doubts may linger as to the purity of the motives by which we are influenced, or the sacred objects we have in view. In solemn truth may we echo the words of our brethren of old, which I have selected for the text of this day's discourse.

אל אלהים ה׳ · אל אלהים ה׳ · הוא יודע וישראל הוא ידע · אם במרד
ואם במעל בה׳ אל תושיענו היום הזה :

"The God of gods, the Eternal! the God of gods, the Eternal! He knoweth, and Israel shall know; if in rebellion or if in transgression against the Lord, may we not be saved this day."—Joshua, xxii. 22.

I proceed to consider this text under two heads: First, "The God of gods, the Eternal, He knoweth." Secondly, "And Israel shall know."

I. That you may fully understand all its bearings, I shall not confine myself to the quotation of one verse only, nor even of half the chapter; for one part of a history thus extracted, too often leaves in obscurity the other with which it is intimately connected. I shall therefore examine into the whole of the twenty-second chapter of Joshua, that I may the better be prepared to apply the text.

After the Israelites, under the command of Joshua, had completed the conquest of Canaan, and were allowed to take possession of their respective inheritances, the children of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe

[1] Psalm, vii. 10.

of Manasseh, who had settled on the other side of the Jordan, built a great altar near the river. No sooner was this fact ascertained, than the great mass of the people gathered themselves together at Shiloh, in battle array, determined to go up to war against their brethren, for having made, as they considered, innovations in Israel's faith. This rash proceeding, we infer from the history, was checked by men of more piety and wisdom; and hence we find, that a deputation, headed by Phineas, was sent to inquire of the three tribes, whether they had set up an altar, and whether for the purpose (as their accusers reported) of turning away from the worship of the true God? The Reubenites and their associates admitted that they had raised an altar, but denied the motives imputed to them: they contended that their altar was built, *not* to weaken, but to strengthen their religion; that they were moved by a pure love for the word of God, and by an ardent wish to transmit their holy faith to their children, in perpetuity. Far from being affrighted at the steps they had taken for the performance of their conscientious duties, they seem to have gloried in their undertaking. The ambassadors, satisfied of the upright and pious conduct of the three tribes, returned to the congregation of Israel; and having made their report, the sacred history informs us, that "the thing pleased the children of Israel." A portion of the honest defence of the accused, constitutes the text of this day's discourse. The chapter closes with the remark, that "The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar עֵד (witness), for it shall be a witness amongst us that the Lord is God!"

If, brethren, there be one thing we prize above all others; if there be one inheritance which we are most anxious to transmit to our posterity; if there be one possession without which life is insupportable, and death terrible; if there be one bounty bestowed by an all-gracious Providence which outweighs all other precious gifts; it is love for the religion in which we have been born, and veneration for the laws in which we have been reared. At all times, in all nations, and most especially in Israel, this religious love and veneration have been evinced, in a greater or less degree, by outward observances. When the most High vouchsafed to make known his divine will to Israel, and to give them commandments, statutes, and enactments אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם "which man might perform and live in them;"[2] numerous outward observances were also commanded to be written, that man might at all times afford to his own people, and to the world at large, proofs of his veneration for the most high authority, by which such laws and institutions had been enacted. That such is the primary intention of all outward acts of religion, the writer of the Pentateuch impresses on our minds, when he assures us:

כי היא חכמתכם ובינתכם לעיני העמים אשר ישמעון את כל החקים האלה
ואמרו רק עם חכם ונבון הגוי הגדול הזה:

"For this shall constitute your wisdom, and your understanding in the eyes of the world, who, when they hear of all these statutes, shall exclaim, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and intelligent people!'[3]"

And truly, as long as the great and impressive precept is adhered to: לא תסף עליו ולא תגרע ממנו

[2] Levit. xviii. 5. [3] Deuteronomy, iv. 6.

"Thou shalt neither add to nor diminish from it;"[4] so long will the people of Israel continue to fulfil the declared purposes of Heaven, so long may they confidently hope, that in them "all the families of the earth will be blessed,"[5] and that through them "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."[6] But if such be the high estimation in which the outward acts of religion have been, and still are, justly held, equally great must be our care not to depart from the *spirit* of the law; nor must those observances, by which we are to manifest our duty to God, supersede that duty itself. We must not confound the form with the substance; we must not regard an infinity of ceremonials as the final aim of religion—viewing as secondary all that is moral, all that is spiritual, all that embraces the eternal salvation of man. For whilst we owe to our God love, veneration, and gratitude, we must not think that we have acquitted ourselves towards Him, if, to the few, but most salutary acts of devotion which He has enjoined, we superadd many unwholesome, because unmeaning ceremonies.

Now since, in the progress of time, it has been the misfortune of our people to fall into this peculiar error, we, who purpose to rectify the evil, as far as it relates to religious worship, consider it a duty we owe to ourselves, and to our brethren at large, to declare, at the very outset of our career, that it is not a desire for innovation, not a want of respect for those institutions which our more immediate ancestors obeyed, but a paramount obligation, a deep sense of right

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[4] Deuteronomy, xiii. 1. [5] Genesis, xii. 3. [6] Isaiah, xi. 9.

which nothing can weaken; a conviction, resulting from long, cool, and serious reflection, that impels us to those measures which, in our inmost hearts, we consider the only means of arousing our brethren from that indifference to spiritual matters, into which they have unhappily sunk; and of preserving our sacred religion from the blight of infidelity, to say nothing of apostasy, which is making inroads amongst us.

It may be well to offer here a word of explanation to those who, misguided by the insinuations of enemies to all improvement, will not take into account the value of changes by the benefits they confer, but who see treason in every attempt to reform the Ritual, and to found our religious practices on the basis of a sound and all-sufficient Exegesis of the Mosaic Code. Treason against the Tradition! is the watchword under whose influence the efforts of the best Israelitish hearts have for years been combated by men, whose exclusive fault has not always been that of the strictest adherence to existing institutions; and since we can scarcely hope that our efforts for the good of Israel, which we consider to be bound up with an improved mode of worship, will escape the enmity of those who are opposed to all change; and since there is a well-grounded fear that we shall be represented as entertaining opinions which are far from our minds; I will, in concise terms, state our sentiments concerning the Tradition known by the name of Oral Law, and professedly contained in the Mishna and the Talmud.

The enemies of the Jews have never yet, since accusations against our people have appeared, omitted to preface their charges with the assertion, that the Jews consider the whole of the Talmud as a work

of divine inspiration: an assertion which has just as zealously been negatived by every defender of the Jewish system, as a condition, without which the defence of Judaism were impossible.

Now, let it not be supposed, that it is the intention of myself, or of any member of this congregation, whose humble organ I am, to impugn, in any way, the character of the traditional records. On the contrary, we recognize in them a valuable aid for the elucidation of many passages in Scripture: we feel proud of them as a monument of the zeal and mental activity of our ancestors; we hold it our duty to reverence the sayings of men, who, we are convinced, would have sacrificed their lives for the maintenance of that Law which God has vouchsafed to deliver unto us; but we must (as our conviction urges us) solemnly deny, that a belief in the *divinity* of the traditions contained in the Mishna, and the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, is of equal obligation to the Israelite with the faith in the divinity of the Law of Moses. We know that these books are human compositions; and though we are content to accept with reverence from our post-biblical ancestors advice and instruction, we cannot *unconditionally* accept their laws. For Israelites, there is but One immutable Law—the sacred volume of the Scriptures, commanded by God to be written down for the unerring guidance of his people until the end of time.

I have already stated, that in repelling attacks from without, the defenders of Judaism have invariably given up the point of considering the whole tenor of the Talmud as a work of divine character. But if this be a truth in controversy, how can the divine

authority of the Talmud be upheld for the purpose of justifying ritual observances, at variance with the commands of God, and the spirit of our own age and feelings, which are clung to with a tenacity worthy of a better cause, merely because they can be traced to the Talmud? On all hands it is conceded, that an absolute necessity exists for the modification of our worship; but no sooner is any important improvement proposed, than we are assured of the sad fact, that there is not at present any authority competent to judge in such matters for the whole House of Israel. Now, admitting this as a truth (since the extinction of the right of ordination has rendered impossible the convocation of a Sanhedrin, whose authority shall extend over all Jewish congregations), does it not follow, as a necessity, that every Hebrew congregation must be authorised to take such measures as shall bring the divine service into consonance with the will of the Almighty, as explained to us in the Law and in the Prophets?

Whilst the whole of Israel was under the guidance of a legally constituted Sanhedrin, let us admit, that it was the duty of every Jew to pay implicit obedience in all practical matters to the heads of that body for the time being. But that tribunal has ceased: for fifteen hundred years we have been without a visible head, and therefore there exists not a shadow of reason for upholding the authority of human decisions, pronounced by men who are not "the judges in our days."[7] The great principles of the Mosaic Law have been every-where held the same; but since those days,

[7] Deuteronomy, xvii. 9.

no absolute similitude of outward observances has been maintained in Israel. In spite of the horror with which beneficent measures of improvement are repulsed, under the plea of their disturbing the unity of Israel, it is a fact, that the customs of one portion of Israelites are, to a considerable extent distinct from those of another portion, in the same city. Important variations exist between the observances of the German and Portuguese synagogues, and greater differences still between those and the customs of the synagogue at Avignon; still, the unity of the people of Israel has never suffered from these discrepancies, although there has been no lack of malevolent designs, at different times and various places, to foment discord, and perhaps schism, between the various congregations of Israelites, on account of pretended deviations from prescribed practices.

Polygamy is, at present, almost as heinous an offence in the eyes of the Jew, in this part of the world, as the crimes prohibited in the Decalogue; and yet the Israelites of Syria and Egypt set at nought the celebrated decision of Rabenu Gershon and a hundred Rabbins, without ever having been considered schismatic by the rest of Israel.[8] So true is

[8] Considerable difference of opinion prevails amongst the Rabbinical writers, as to the extent of authority belonging to the 'Interdict' of R. Gershon and the Synod at Worms, against Polygamy, &c. According to R. Joseph Karo, its power was to become extinct at the expiration of the fifth millennium of the creation—602 years ago. R. Moses Isserles considers the *Herem* binding upon all Israelites, wherever it became known; whereas R. Solomon Ben Abraham Ben Adereth, states, that in his time (about 1300 of the vulgar era), the decree of R. Gershon was disregarded by many, not only in Spain, but likewise in the South of France. (See *Shulchan*

it, that no decrees, emanating in modern times from any authority whatever, have any binding force upon Israelites generally. Hence, then, the alternative of either taking the work of improving the mode of worship into our own hands, or of acquiescing in the continuance of a state in which the decay of Judaism becomes every day more imminent.

Not, then, to weaken, but to strengthen our faith; not to trespass against, but to consolidate the great principles of that law which our fathers tremblingly heard amidst the thunders of Sinai—this Synagogue has been established. Our unerring guide has been and will continue to be, the sacred volume of the Scriptures; by that *alone* have we endeavoured to regulate our principles. In matters relating to public worship, we desire to reject nothing that bears the stamp of antiquity, when that stamp is genuine, and in accordance with the revealed will of God; nor to condemn anything because it is new, provided the newness of the measure be consonant with the spirit of the religion given us by the Almighty through Moses; a religion so framed as to adapt itself to all our destinies, in all their various phases, whether politically glorious on the throne of David, or politically prostrate in the thraldom of dispersion.

We are, happily, emerging from the darkness into which persecutions of unparalleled intensity and

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*Aruch, Eben Haezer*, i. 10 ; *Hagaoth R. Moses Isserles ; Responses of R. Solomon Ben Adereth*, iii. 446).

The broad fact to be deduced from the above argument is, that, whilst the majority of the Jews, all over the globe, religiously adhere to the practice of Monogamy, exceptions from this important rule *do* exist, without endangering the religious unity of Israel.

duration had banished us; our domestic, social, and political life, is assuming a brightness, which we feel assured will continue to become even more cheering. Shall then, my brethren, the life of the Synagogue alone, remain darkened by the shadows of a sad, sad time? Is that most cherished part of our edifice to continue hung with the drapery of the deepest mourning and despair, whilst every other part on which our eyes dwell is decked with colours of the brightest hue?

Too long has this evil endured; too long have we lamented the alarming progress of withering indifference, sapping the very foundations of our faith. We could no longer remain inactive; but resolved to merge every consideration of labour, time, difficulties, and even opprobrium, in the absolute necessity of establishing this temple of prayer, the consecration of which our gracious God has permitted us to witness to-day. Let it be our earnest endeavour to raise this Synagogue, our common house, high above every other establishment in which our efforts are visible; to make a way for the light of heaven to shine upon it, and to enkindle the flame of fervent devotion in every bosom that throbs within its sacred precincts.

As Israelites, who have the glory of God at heart, we feel the importance of averting the evil blow, which ignorance and misconception cannot fail to strike at our hallowed institutions, especially in days, whose peculiar character it is, to submit every system to the severity of critical scrutiny. We feel that the time has arrived, when we must do our utmost to make our religion respected, not only in the sight of the world at large, but, which is of far greater

concern, in the sight of our rising community, who will not rest satisfied with the insignificant assurance, that a practice must be revered because it has sprung into existence in countries, and under circumstances, totally different from those under the influence of which we live. That these grave and important considerations have alone moved us in the formation of our new congregation; אל אלהים ה׳ הוא יודע "The God of gods, the Eternal! he knoweth."

II. And now, וישראל הוא ידע "That Israel may also know," let us briefly consider, my brethren, what the house of worship once was, and what it has become in our days. There was a time, when the house of God was vividly animated by the sacred fires of piety and devotion; thither flocked the hundreds and thousands of Israel, whose souls thirsted for the spring of life; from the joys and sorrows of the world they retreated; from their minds they banished every outward relation of life, to hold uninterrupted communion with the Fountain of all good, the Source of all benefits, —the Lord God of Israel. With silence, awe, a profound recollection of their own nothingness, and a deep sense of the majesty of the Most High God, our fathers approached the altar of prayer. All their thoughts, all their desires were heaven-ward; in praise, in thanksgiving, and in supplication, they poured out their souls to their Almighty Protector; acknowledging Him alone great, alone eternal, alone mighty to save.

Prayer was, then, the wing on which the soul took her flight to the throne of God, the bridge which united earth to heaven! It was the spontaneous

effusion of pious hearts, overflowing with gratitude to the great Parent of nature, for the countless benefits daily and hourly dispensed to His children. In prosperity, they sang the praises of the all-bounteous donor; in adversity, they implored fortitude and resignation to bear the chastening hand which His divine pleasure had laid upon them. Prayer was not then a task, but a sacred privilege: its efficacy was not tested by the page or the volume; but by the sentiments of which it was the offspring, and the devotion with which it was addressed to the supreme Being.

Although the sacred scriptures do not order us to pray at stated times, and at a given length (for prayer cannot be commanded), yet the several specimens of prayer, which are scattered through the holy volume, are remarkable for their sublimity, no less than for their brevity. When the father of the prophets supplicates the Eternal for the perverse people who had set up an idol, his prayer is limited to three verses;[9] when he prays for the restoration of his sister Miriam, one line suffices, אל נא רפא נא לה "O God, heal her now, I beseech thee."[10] When the prophet Elijah is about to put to shame the worshippers of Baal, and to vindicate the majesty of the Eternal, the pith of his prayer is conveyed in three words: ענני ה' ענני "Answer me, O God, answer me."[11]

That the soul-stirring ceremonies of the temple at Jerusalem were, of themselves, sufficient to inspire devotion and awe; and that, when the holy house was destroyed and the sacrifice had ceased, it became

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[9] Exodus, xxxii. 11, 12, 13. [10] Numb. xii. 13. [11] 1 Kings, xviii. 37.

indispensable to institute additional prayers, must at once be conceded. Yet let it not be imagined, that the formulæ then composed were so lengthy, and, as a consequence, so incapable of preserving devotion, as those in general use in our times. The heads of Israel in those days, had far too correct an impression of the objects of prayer, to make it a task. In spite of the ravages of time, we may still boast of having preserved to us many of the early compositions, which breathe sentiments of the most exalted piety and enlarged humanity; they are, in every way, adapted to the situation of man, when in communion with God; and yet these compositions are almost as brief as they are appropriate. The glorification of the Deity, grateful acknowledgments for his manifold mercies, the nothingness of man and of earthly objects, the eternity of God and his wondrous perfections, and fervent supplications for the restoration of the Temple to Zion's holy hill, constituted the inspiring liturgy of those days. Well might our fathers have been impressed with such a service; well might they have exclaimed with the Psalmist: טוב יום בחצריך מאלף "A single day in thy courts is preferable to a thousand elsewhere."[12]

But community of prayer was neither the sole object, nor the ultimate aim, of the Synagogue. That the old denomination of בית תפלה "House of Prayer" was soon displaced by the name בית הכנסת "House of Assembly," strongly indicates, that public religious instruction constituted a prominent feature of the divine service. However efficacious solemn and

[12] Psalm, lxxxiv. 11.

devout prayer might be, it was not of itself deemed sufficient for all the purposes of religion. Something more was needed to arouse man to a sense of his condition on earth, to instruct him in his duties towards God and his fellow man, to elevate and ennoble his sentiments, and to excite him to piety and active benevolence. These important benefits were readily found in weekly and (not unfrequently) in daily discourses upon the doctrine and practices of the holy Faith. Nor was this instruction limited to either age or sex: the Synagogue opened wide her portals to old and young, men, women, and children, who were all affectionately invited to slake their thirst at the "Fountain of living waters."[13] Indeed, there were certain periods, when it was compulsory upon all the women to attend the holy house, to hear the word of God expounded; for such was the impressive command of the great King of kings, through his servant Moses.

הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף וגרך אשר בשעריך למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו · ויראו את יי אלהיכם ושמרו לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת :

"Assemble the people, the men, the women, and the children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law."[14]

And oh! how grateful to our brothers and sisters of old was the blessed privilege of entering the community of God, to receive instruction in his divine ordinances! In the pages of Nehemiah we have an eloquent description of the longing desire of Israel's sons and daughters to hear again read the book of the law, the book of life, after their return from the

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[13] Jeremiah, xi. 13. [14] Deut. xxxi. 12.

seventy years' captivity: "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man, into the street before the water-gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all who could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month, and he read therein before the street that was before the water-gate from the morning until mid-day, before the men, and the women, and those that could understand: and the ears of the people were attentive to the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for that purpose: and beside him stood Mattithiah and Shema, and Anaiah and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Masseiah on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael and Malchiah and Hashum and Hashbadana, Zechariah and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people), and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord, with their faces to the ground."[15]

Here, dear brethren, we perceive the sublime effects of divine worship, blending prayer with religious instruction. That these two great essentials were preserved in the Synagogue for centuries after Ezra and Nehemiah, cannot be doubted; and that they

[15] Nehemiah, viii. 1—6.

were productive of similar beneficial results, may be inferred from the piety which stamps the characters and writings of the men of those ages. Truly were their hearts rejoiced and their souls gladdened when they entered the house of God; here their hearts were purified by the sacred springs of religion; here they were inspired with the love of God and of their fellow-man; here their darkness was enlightened, their weakness sustained; here their errors were dissipated, their baneful passions controlled, their good desires strengthened; here religion gave a balm for every woe, and a remedy for every disease of the mind and of the heart.

Such, O dear brethren, were the sentiments which the Synagogue of olden days inspired; alas! for the change that has come over us! Where is the devotion that was wont to reign in the house of God? where are the sacred fires that animated our fathers? where is the pulpit that once taught the blessed truths of salvation and eternity? Does the service now impress us, do we leave our Synagogue better in mind or in spirit than we entered it; do we feel as if we had been in converse with the most High; do we draw from it those benefits which it was intended and is calculated to effect?

Alas! my friends, that with a bitter heart and a mournful spirit, we are compelled to reply, "No!" to these important questions! To pray for protection, sustenance, health, life, salvation, and immortality, is to solicit blessings of the highest magnitude: and yet from the many abuses, which are permitted to distract the attention, and to banish devotion in most of the present Synagogues, can it be believed, that men are

really impressed either with the nature or the import of the blessings which they ask of God? Who can reflect on the בית הכנסת of olden days, and not arrive at the painful conviction of the degeneracy of our modern houses of prayer—when we find the men's Synagogue but partially attended, the women's gallery almost solitary, the pulpit mute, and religious instruction totally exiled?

In endeavouring to trace the causes which have produced this painful contrast, we shall not discover them in the insufficiency of our holy religion, for that is eternal and immutable as its Almighty Founder; but in the abuses engendered by ages of darkness, superstition, and intolerance. Eastern customs totally at variance with the habits and dispositions of an enlightened people have been associated with our religious practices. Woman, created by God as a "help meet for man," and in every way his equal; woman, endowed by the same parental care, as man, with wondrous perceptions, that she might participate (as it may be inferred from holy Writ, that she was intended to participate) in the full discharge of every moral and religious obligation, has been degraded below her proper station. The power of exercising those exalted virtues that appertain to her sex, has been withheld from her; and since equality has been denied to her in other things, as a natural consequence, it has not been permitted to her in the duties and delights of religion. It is true, that education has done much to remedy this injustice in other respects; yet does its memory live in the indifference manifested for the religious instruction of females.

It cannot be doubted, that this indifference is one of the fruitful sources of the laxity in the Jewish religion, which we so much deplore. The duties to be performed by women lie at the very foundation of human life; for as upon them depends the earliest education of the great body of mankind, and as the mind is ever powerfully influenced by the lessons received in infancy, it is as hopeless to expect a truly pious community, where proper religious instruction is withheld from females, as to look for effect without cause.

Another serious evil may be discovered in the extreme length of the prayers, and in the blending with them of heterogeneous opinions and metaphysical disquisitions, that can have no affinity with prayer. This renders it impossible to command the unwearied attention of the congregation during the entire service, and defeats every effort to excite devotion.

An over-fondness for opinions of bye-gone times, and a veneration for every custom and observance that claims antiquity, have been equally detrimental to the interests of Judaism. To such lengths have these prejudices extended, that many institutions, which sheer necessity, and not choice, had led our fathers to adopt, have been rigidly adhered to in our times, although the causes that produced them have long ceased to exist. I may instance the several Chaldaic compositions, as scattered through the liturgy, and which could only have been introduced with the laudable intention of making the prayers intelligible to those uninformed in the sacred Hebrew; yet have these formulæ been clung to with great tenacity, at a time when, it must be acknowledged,

that the Chaldee has become obsolete, whilst the Hebrew is far better understood. Again, the observance of double festivals—a practice which originated before the astronomical calculation of the calendar was introduced—has, nevertheless, been rigorously upheld in days when our calculations are most minute, and when we are enabled to determine the months, even to a fraction of a minute. Thus, with directly contrary evidence before us, have we continued to pronounce in our Synagogues, אלה מועדי ה׳ מקראי קדש "These are the festivals of the Lord, holy convocations"[16] both upon the days whereon God commanded their observance, and the days whereon He commanded it not.

If, in addition to these grave abuses, we consider the unseasonable hour at which the morning service commences, the levity occasioned by the מי שברך during the reading of the Law, the sale and distribution of the מצות, and the want of pulpit instruction, we shall have arrived at the principal causes that have depressed Judaism, and that have separated so many in Israel from their God.

It is, my friends, to remedy these glaring evils that this synagogue has been formed, and the improvements we have determined to introduce therein will, I trust in God, prove most effectual in restoring the house of worship to a state so pure, that the presence of God may abide there.

The time appointed for divine service is such as to enable the entire congregation, men, women, and children, to assemble prior to the commencement of prayer. The prayers will be read aloud by the

[16] Levit. xxiii. 37.

minister only; appropriate psalms and hymns will be chaunted by the choir, and responses made by the congregation. The reading of the Law will not be interrupted by the עֲלִיָּה, for as that institution has long lost its primary aim, the necessity for it no longer exists. Free-will offerings, unaccompanied by personal compliments, will be permitted in the synagogue on the three festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, as well as on such other days as occasions may require, after the book of the Law shall have been returned to the Ark.[17] It will be incumbent upon children of both sexes, connected with this synagogue, to be publicly confirmed in their faith at the age of thirteen years;[18] the catechetical exercises joined with this important ceremony will embrace the whole of the principles of the Jewish faith. As prayer will be offered up in Hebrew only, and as it is indispensable that every Israelite should perfectly understand the supplications he addresses to the Supreme Being, I confidently hope that the sacred language will be generally cultivated by both sexes of this congregation. The holy festivals will be celebrated on those days *only*, commanded by God through our legislator Moses. The days commemorative of the great events of Jewish history will be duly observed.

Thus have I, my friends, as amply as the limits of a discourse will permit, endeavoured to explain the motives that have prompted the present undertaking.

[17] It was subsequently determined that the offerings should be announced at the end of the service, so that the attention of the congregants might not be drawn away from their devotions.

[18] If duly qualified.

I have considered the true objects of the synagogue, the sentiments it once inspired, and its present state of desolation; I have examined into the causes of the apathy to Judaism existing among Israelites, and detailed the measures by which we hope to rekindle a love for our ancient faith, and to render our Synagogue a house of devotion and of religious instruction.

That this exposition will fully exonerate us from the imputation of entertaining the wild speculations which ignorance and misconception of our principles have laid to our charge, I am most confident. וישראל הוא ידע "For Israel will know" that this synagogue has not been established as a "rebellion or trespass against the Lord God," nor to turn away from following after the Lord, nor for the purpose of relieving ourselves from our fair contributions to our poorer brethren, for whose support we consider it our privilege, as it certainly is our bounden duty, to make a provision from the means with which the Lord our God has blessed us;—but to publish His eternal name, and to transmit His word to those who shall come after us, so that the Law He hath commanded unto us "may not depart from us, nor from our children, nor from our children's children from henceforth and evermore."[19]

Every effort we have made for the regeneration of our synagogue, we have striven to confine strictly to the spirit of the immutable Law of God. By this guide we have proceeded, and to the sacred behests therein written, I solemnly trust we shall be found to

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[19] Isaiah, lix. 28.

render obedience. For let it not be supposed, that this house is intended as a synagogue of ease or convenience; that it has been established as a formal place of meeting for those who set at nought the declared will of God. No, my friends, such men need not labour for improvement; they need no sacrifice of time, ease, and means, to effect ameliorations in our religious worship, since any system will please that affords them a formal connection with a nominally religious community. But for those who cherish a sincere love for their religion, who consider their well-being in this life and their immortal hopes hereafter to be indissolubly bound up in a rigid practical observance of the Mosaic Law, this Synagogue has been reared.

Firm in the rectitude of our endeavours, conscious of the goodness of the cause in which we have embarked, we feel assured that the principles of reason and truth, on which this congregation is based, will make their way amongst all the thinking portion of our rising community; and that Judaism will again awake from its long, long slumbers.

This Synagogue, though humble in its commencement, will, by the blessing of Divine Providence, prove a harbinger of better days to the House of Israel. It will arouse our people to a proper sense of the eternal obligation of God's Law, and the comparative nothingness of the ordinances of Man. It will lead them to look upon God as the only יורה דעה; they will be taught that to perform the will of Heaven (to use the words of the Prophet Isaiah) is not to multiply observances—

צו לצו צו לצו קו לקו קו לקו זעיר שם זעיר שם :

"Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line: here a little and there a little;"—Isaiah, xxviii. 10.

but to be obedient to the will of God. Even thus speaks our immortal legislator:

לשמר מצותיו וחקתיו הכתובה בספר התורה הזה כי תשוב אל יי אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך : כי המצוה הזאת אשר אנכי מצוך היום לא נפלאת הוא ממך ולא רחקה הוא : לא בשמים הוא לאמר מי יעלה לנו השמימה ויקחה לנו וישמענו אתה ונעשנה : ולא מעברלים הואלאמר מי יעבר לנו אל עבר הים ויקחה לנו וישמענו אתה ונעשנה : כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבבך לעשתו :

"To keep his commandments and statutes, as they are written in this Book of the Law; if thou wilt turn to the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. For this commandment, which I command thee this day, is not above thy comprehension, nor is it out of thy reach: it is not in Heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to Heaven, and fetch it for us, that we may hear it and perform it? neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, who will go over the sea for us and fetch it for us, that we may hear it and perform it? For the word is exceedingly near to thee; it is in thy mouth, it is in thy heart, that thou mayest perform it."[20]

By the spirit of devotion that will mark this house; by pouring out the praises of our lips from the fountain of our hearts, we shall free ourselves from the prophet's rebuke:

נגש העם הזה בפיו ובשפתיו כבדוני ולבו רחק ממני ותהי יראתם אתי מצורת אנשים מלמדה :

"This people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips they honour me, but their heart is removed far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men."[21]

For, by returning to God, He will return unto us, and will dwell within our temple, as he has mercifully promised. Then will our prayers, our supplications, and our thanksgivings, be graciously accepted, "as in olden days and in former years;" and then, in the words of the chapter of our text, may we truly call

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[20] Deuteronomy, xxx. 10—14. [21] Isaiah, xxix. 13.

our synagogue עֵד (Witness); for it shall be a witness amongst us that the Lord is God!

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## PRAYER.

And do Thou, O Almighty God, whose eye penetrates into the secret folds of the heart; who regardest not the words of the lips, but the motives that dictate their utterance—do thou in thy mercy, O Lord God of Hosts, look down from thy holy habitation, from Heaven, and visit this house, raised by thy servants, where we may praise thee with psalms and thanksgiving, proclaim the Unity of thy name, invoke thy heavenly protection, and learn to understand, and in understanding to perform, the words which thou hast commanded through Moses thy servant.

Bless, O Lord God, the congregation here assembled, great and small; imbue them all with thy Spirit, so that they keep stedfast to thy hallowed commands. Suffer not the fear of mortal man to sway them, but teach them to put their trust in Thee, O Lord, their help and their shield. Bless also the whole remnant of thy people Israel, and plant in all our hearts love, kindness, and charity. O make us all to feel that we are one people, sprung from one stock, embracing one faith, acknowledging one Law, one God, one common parent.

O Lord God, God of the spirits of all flesh, before whom all things are revealed; thou alone knowest the feelings of my heart, whilst I pour out my supplications before thee. Alas! I am unworthy of all the mercy and truth which thou hast shewn unto thy

servant, I am unworthy to stand in this sacred place to minister before thee for this congregation. Therefore I beseech thee, O my God, "who givest speech to man," grant mē an eloquent tongue that I may "teach the weary a word in season;" prepare my heart to thy service, so that the word I speak to this people may be the word of the Lord in truth and in integrity. Show me the way I should go and the way I should lead this congregation: O grant me influence among them, that they may incline their ear to me: not for the sake of covetousness, not for the sake of fame, not for my private honour, but for thy name, for thy glory, for thy honour, O my God! Hold up my goings in thy path, so that I look not to the right hand nor to the left. Whichever way I turn, O grant me wisdom, and let me say as David thy servant, "I have set the Lord always before me, for whilst he is on my right hand I shall never be moved." O may this be thy divine will, O God, my Rock and my Redeemer! Amen.

## II.

# THE SABBATH AND THE SANCTUARY.

*Preached on Sabbath* פ׳ בהר *May* 24, 5605.

LEVITICUS XVI.-2.

את שבתתי תשמרו ומקדשי תיראו

"Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary."

THE importance of the Sabbath, its moral duties and ritual observances, its practical influence on the health, the comforts, and the social habits of mankind, as well as its direct tendency to promote the glory of God and the salvation of the human race, occupy so prominent a place in the volume of the Bible, that it is scarcely possible for the Jewish minister to go through a yearly course of pulpit instruction, without having frequent occasion to remind his congregants of that ancient and blessed institution, which is set forth in the fourth article of the Decalogue.

If we except the behest that restricts the worship of the Hebrews to the one and only God, there is no precept of the divine will to which Moses so constantly refers, as the Sabbath. In the very opening of the

world's history, he gives it a prominent place, and he represents the supreme Architect of the Universe to have blessed and sanctified it, after the completion of the six days, when the divine, creative, power was in operation. In the desert of Sin, when God rains down food from heaven for His people, Moses strictly enjoins the observance of the Sabbath, and emphatically prohibits the Israelites from violating its sanctity. "This day," saith he, "is a holy Sabbath to the Lord; on this day you shall not seek *your bread* in the field."[1] The Ten Commandments are delivered at Sinai, and the Sabbath (which, it should seem, from what takes place on the sixth day of the falling of the manna, had long been recognised, if not regularly solemnised) is now formally commanded as a chief article of the Sinaic covenant. Still Moses does not cease to return to it again and again. During the progress of the work for the travelling משכן (tabernacle), the voice of the legislator is heard, charging every artizan engaged in the sacred labour, to lay aside the implements of his industry before the going down of the sun on the sixth day, and to prepare to inaugurate the blessed Sabbath. In fact, the various precepts and ordinances which Moses from time to time is charged to rehearse to the Hebrews, comprise scarcely a single section, in which he does not most earnestly and solemnly enforce the observance of the Sabbath. He does more: He makes it the uniform criterion of Israel's fidelity or treason[2]

[1] Exod. xvi. 25.

[2] כל עושה מלאכה בשבת הוא מכחש במעשה בראשית "Whoever does any servile work on the Sabbath, virtually denies his belief in the divine work of creation" (Aben Ezra on Exodus, cap. xx).

to Him that emancipated them from the bondage of the Pharaohs, and of their regard or indifference for all the commandments of God. He tells his disciples, that the due reverence of the Seventh Day may ever be considered by them as the precursor of their national prosperity and happiness; whilst the desecration of the holy Sabbath may be regarded with equal certainty as the fore-runner of their degradation and national ruin.

The Sabbath is presented to us in two points of view: first, as it affects the recruiting of our strength, the preservation of our health, and the promotion of our domestic and social happiness; and, secondly, as a means of cultivating the faculties of the heart, enlarging our spiritual capacities, beautifully designated by the Rabbins נשמה יתרה[3] (the superior soul), and of training ourselves for that state of eternal blessedness, in which the Lord has graciously promised to place all his children, not the disciples of Moses *only*, but, as the prophet Isaiah tells us, בן הנכר "the son of the stranger"[4] also, who shall faithfully and religiously observe the Sabbath Day. Now the passage found at the head of this sermon presents the institution of the Sabbath in the latter point of view; and it goes a great way to instruct us, without the aid of any human expositor, as to what is really meant by the word לקדשו to keep it (the Sabbath) holy.

If the Sabbath day were altogether divested of its spiritual character, and were regarded only in reference to its social relations and benefits; if it involved no celebration of public or private worship, but were simply kept as a day of universal cessation from

[3] Taanith 27. [4] Isaiah, lvi. 6.

worldly toil; it could scarcely fail, even in this restricted sense, to do homage to the Almighty Creator and to find favour in His sight. The Great Parent of the universe has so much love and compassion for every creature which His hand has formed, that He would regard with holy complacency and delight the return of every seventh day, when the employer should be free from anxiety and care, when the labourer and the hireling should repose after six days of successive toil, and when every useful and patient beast of burden should be at large, and suffered to graze, without restraint, on the pastures furnished for it by His merciful providence. But, without stopping to discuss the question—by no means an unimportant one—whether this universal cessation from labour could possibly obtain, if the moral and social obligations of the Sabbath were not intimately and indissolubly bound up with its religious observances—it is sufficient for us to know that God, who is alone acquainted with the secret springs of the human heart, and who is perfectly aware of the discipline we require in order that we may accomplish our appointed end, has in His wisdom ordained that the seventh day shall contribute as much, at least, to the refreshing and the improvement of the soul, as to the health and invigoration of the body. The Sabbath is, therefore, commanded to us not only as a day of recreation, but also as a day of sanctity. On this day we are to have a respite from labour, our common lot, and to recruit our physical strength. On this day also we are to educate our spirits and to bring them into communion with God. We are charged to *hallow* the Seventh Day, which, by the aid of the passage of

the text, we may reasonably determine to mean this: to devote a portion of the Sabbath to Psalms, and thanksgivings; to prayer and supplication for heavenly support and for a continuance of divine protection; to cultivate on this day a knowledge of God's revealed law; to test by that infallible standard our conduct during the past week; to ascertain how far we have approached to the fountain of light and truth, and where we have fallen short of the moral and religious duties which our gracious Creator and Ruler has charged us to perform. In fine, to hallow the Sabbath, is to strive on that day to collect our scattered thoughts, to correct the irregularities of our lives, and to prepare ourselves for that time which every hour is bringing nearer, when the Lord will call home our spirits and will enter with us into judgment. "Behold," says Aben Ezra, השבת נתנה להבין מעשי השם ולהגות בתורתו "the Sabbath was given that you might strive to understand the ways and doings of God and that you might meditate on his law." Now the Synagogue is the only place where those prayerful duties can be best performed, and those holy reflections most effectually excited. Hence then the summons which Almighty God sends us to present ourselves at the sanctuary where His name is praised by the assembled congregation, where His mercy is publicly implored, and His Holy Word is taught; and hence the remarkable significance of the passage of our text, combining Sabbath rest with Sabbath worship, את שבתתי תשמרו ומקדשי תיראו "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary."

But the wisdom of blending these two important duties, and of making the Sabbath and the Synagogue

go hand in hand, is capable of being more fully illustrated. The Sabbath is not merely an obligation imposed upon us in our *individual* capacities, like that of prayer, repentance, or self-examination, which we can discharge in our private chambers; but it is a commandment which God Himself requires us all to observe with one accord, and in the *most public* manner, as an acknowledgement that He is the Creator of the world, and the dispenser of all benefits. "The children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. Between Me and between the children of Israel it is a perpetual sign, that in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and that on the Seventh Day He rested and was refreshed."[5] If, then, we are to act up to the spirit of this divine charge; if we are to join in this public act of homage and of glorification to the Deity (intended as an example to the masses of mankind), we must feel convinced that the Synagogue is especially the place to which we Israelites must resort in order to perform the will of our Creator.

It is at once conceded that there are varied and innumerable instances, in which we may promote the glory of the Almighty. We glorify Him whenever we overrule our prejudices, suppress our enmity, and forgive an injury inflicted upon us by our neighbour: we glorify Him whenever we assist to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the afflicted, to relieve the wretched, and to protect the poor, the widow and the orphan; and we glorify Him whenever we practise an act of self-denial for the sake of a fellow-creature, of what

[5] Exod. xxxi. 16, 17.

Creed or clime soever he be. But as these religious obligations for the most part are, or ought to be, fulfilled with as much secresy as possible, the homage which we here pay to our Creator is of a private nature, not so much intended to serve as an example to others, or to publish the effects which piety has wrought in our hearts, as to acquit ourselves of the duties of mercy and charity. With regard to the obligation of sanctifying the Sabbath, however, the question is very different, since it does not confine itself to the silent or private operations of piety; but it obliges us, in the clear and precise terms of Scripture, to bear *public testimony*, by means of our sanctification of the Seventh Day, to the important fact, which the Sabbath is intended to commemorate, that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and that He continues, and ever will continue, to govern it.

Where then, I would ask, is this grand truth to be publicly proclaimed by us, if not in the Synagogue, the common house of thanksgiving and prayer, and the resort of all the pious sons and daughters of Israel? Hither, therefore, the voice of Almighty God calls us, as it summoned our fathers in olden times to the Temple at Jerusalem, on each return of the Sabbath Day. Here it behoves us to publish our conviction, that "The Lord is good to all, and that His mercy is extended to all His works;"[6] here it becomes us "to make known to the children of men His mighty acts and the glorious majesty of His kingdom;"[7] and here we are to record our sense of the goodness of God who, ere He bade chaos to vanish and the wonders of creation to appear, had purposed

[6] Psalm cxlv. 9. [7] Psalm cxlv. 12.

to crown His work with the institution of the Sabbath. Most felicitously has the Hebrew poet expressed it, סוף מעשה במחשבה תחלה "although it (the Sabbath) was the end of the work of creation, it was the first in the thought."

It hath pleased our Father in Heaven to make known to us through the prophet Isaiah, that He has willed us to be unto Him a nation of witnesses.[8] Say then, my hearers, when can we so well act in accordance with this Divine command, and when can we exhibit ourselves so prominently to mankind as God's witnesses, as on the Sabbath Day, when we enter our common temple of prayer, attended by our wives and children, when rich and poor stand side by side as the Lord's equal witnesses, and when we all exclaim as with one heart and one voice "Every bird findeth a shelter: the swallow hath her nest where she layeth her young ones to rest: such *to me* are thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God"[9]? We are indeed God's witnesses when we thus assemble to proclaim Him, to whom we give thanks, as the friend and benefactor of the world, "from whom all cometh, and out of whose own hand we make Him offerings;"[10] and Him whose mercy we invoke, as the sole object of our worship, as the only Being that can forgive our transgressions, shield us from danger, fulfil our requests, and grant us peace of mind here, and the prize of salvation hereafter.

I would not, my friends, be understood as giving currency to the doctrine, that in hallowing the Sabbath Day we do all that Judaism requires of us; and that in obeying one article of the Decalogue, we acquit

[8] Isa. xliii. 10. [9] Psalm lxxxiv. 4. [10] 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

ourselves of all the obligations, moral and religious, enjoined in the Mosaic code. But this I will venture to assert, that whoever sincerely and conscientiously sanctifies the Lord's Sabbath, is unquestionably in the right road for making perfect his heart with his Maker. He that observes the fourth commandment and carries into effect its several duties, will find in the Sabbath an anchor of hope; for how much soever he may have deviated in other respects from the letter and the spirit of the Book of the Covenant, the hallowing of the Sabbath in the sense in which I am now considering it, will hardly fail to bring his transgression to remembrance, and to induce him to seek earnestly after God, in whose sacred institution of the Seventh Day the sinner will recognise divine love and mercy, forgiveness and grace.

From what has been advanced, every congregant will have formed, it is hoped, clear ideas of the influence exerted by the Synagogue with regard to the sanctification of the Seventh Day: and I will now attempt to illustrate in a very few words the proposition, that the Synagogue leans for support on the ordinance of the Sabbath. It is not the magnitude of the building, no, nor the elaborate art with which the architect's cunning has adorned it, that confers true dignity on the Synagogue; but the number of the faithful which it attracts to its altar, and the reverence and devotion that each worshipper brings with him for the performance of its prayerful duties. If the divine service be shared in but by a few individuals, how pious and ardent soever they be, the Synagogue will wear an aspect of solitude and gloom, of despondency and languor. But far different

is the appearance which it will present, when a whole congregation of families meet together for a common object, when every heart responds to the Father of All, as His promises of life and hope and happiness eternal are read, and when every tongue breaks forth in a universal "Amen" to the supplications offered up at the throne of God on behalf of mankind at large. Now it is not to be expected that a scene like this, at once glorious to the Almighty and honourable to man, should be realised on every day of the week. With very few exceptions, we are all men of active occupations in life, each having some worldly labour to perform, some business pursuit to follow. Moreover, our wives and daughters have varied duties to discharge at home, which must not be neglected. If, then, we even contrived to meet at Synagogue, as many of our brethren do, for an hour *every* day before we commenced our worldly task, it might very reasonably be questioned whether we could derive the full benefit from our public devotion, seeing that we should commence it without due preparation, and that no time would be allowed for reflection after the close of the service; but that we should have to pass at once from the exercises of piety to the all-engrossing occupations of a business-life."

But, happily, the sentiments which influence us on the holy Sabbath, the day of rest, are very different.

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" חסידים הראשונים היו שוהים שעה אחת ומתפללים כדי שיכונו את לבם למקום

" Our pious ancestors devoted an hour before Prayer to Meditation, in order that they might turn their thoughts devoutly towards God." (Mishna, Berachoth Chap. v. 1.)

There is now a pause in our career of labour: our anxieties, if not altogether removed, are for a time at least forgotten; our minds are at ease, and our day, emancipated from the trammels of the board, the counter, and the desk, belongs more especially to God and to our spiritual advancement. The prayers, therefore, which we put up to-day, and on other holy sabbaths, produce in our hearts emotions of a loftier and more spiritual character, than those which we are accustomed to feel when we pray each morning during the week of labour. Now the reason of this difference, my hearers, is very obvious. Here, in the Synagogue, we are surrounded by many influences which are especially favourable to the expansion of piety, and here our spirits become sensible of a generous warmth which we do not feel at other times, when we perform our devotions in our private chambers. To every one to whom the ties of kindred and the love of mankind are more than mere names, there must be something deeply affecting and morally beautiful in public worship. When we look about us to day we perceive a congregation composed for the most part, of our parents, our wives and children, our sisters and brothers, our friends and acquaintances, of every age and every condition, bending with one accord at the foot of the altar, praying with each other and for each other, bringing their petitions to the same throne of mercy, imploring the same protection and heavenly guidance, and resting their hopes on the Father and Benefactor of the Universe, without whose light all would be darkness, and without whose heavenly consolation all would be perplexity and despair. It is scarcely possible that

any piously-minded creature should be able to resist the all-pervading influence of such a scene. It speaks to our hearts with a force that cannot be communicated to any language that is addressed to our ears. It moves us to serious reflection, strikes the finest chords in our hearts, and prompts us to earnest and devout prayer. Moreover, it assists us to develop our latent spiritual faculties, and teaches us how to estimate the sacred privilege of communion with our Maker, and how to render thanks, where they are so especially due, for the sweet comforts and varied blessings of public worship. It is only when such sentiments are in operation, that we are enabled to satisfy ourselves how truly the Lord accomplishes His gracious promise—that they who come to seek Him truly at the place appointed for divine service, shall be filled with spiritual delight, and shall receive His blessing on their coming in and on their going out.

Seeing then, dear brethren, the advantages of combining the two duties specified in the 26th chapter of Leviticus, the hallowing of the Sabbath and the reverence of the Sanctuary,—how the Sabbath leans for its sanctity on the Synagogue, and the Synagogue owes all its dignity of public worship to the institution of the Sabbath,—I sincerely trust that no congregant will leave the house of worship this day without carrying away with him the scriptural lesson which I have endeavoured to deduce from the passage of the text. Ponder well on the sacred words, and then, my hearers, you will, in all probability, be led to mark your appreciation of the fourth commandment, by sanctifying the Seventh Day agreeably to the manner

indicated by the highest authority—in matters of Religion, the only authority,—the written word of God.

"Hallow my Sabbaths," saith the Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, "and then (והביאותים אל הר קדשי) you will be brought to my holy mountain (ושמחתים בבית תפלתי) and you will be made joyful in my house of Prayer, and (עולתיהם וזבחיהם לרצון על מזבחי) your ritual performances shall be accepted at mine Altar." And such will be the effects produced on mankind at large by the universal Sabbath-sanctity and Sabbath-worship of the Hebrews (כי ביתי בית תפלה יקרא לכל העמים) that God's house will be acknowledged a house of Prayer by all peoples.[12]

[12] Isaiah lvi. 7.

# III.

## A GREAT MAN IN MISFORTUNE.

*Preached on Sabbath* פי׳ ויצא *Dec* 6, 5606.

II. Samuel XV. 25, 26.

ויאמר המלך לצדוק השב את ארון האלהים העיר אם אמצה חן בעיני יי והשבני
והראני אותו ואת נוהו · ואם כה יאמר לא חפצתי בך הנני יעשה לי כאשר
טוב בעיניו

"And the king said to Zadok the priest, Carry back the Ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the sight of God, He will bring me back again, and will permit me to behold His ark and His habitation. But if He should say thus; 'I have no such desire concerning thee:' here I am; let Him do unto me what seemeth good in His sight."

The passage selected for the text of the present sermon offers to our view the sublime and affecting picture of a great man in misfortune. Let it be our first care to acquaint ourselves with the critical position in which the throne, and even the life, of David were placed, by a revolution as unprovoked as it was unexpected, when he gave expression to the pious sentiments just quoted; and then let us endeavour to derive a practically moral lesson from the conduct displayed by the Psalmist under one of the greatest trials to which humanity can be subjected!

Some twelve years prior to the date of the chapter before us, David, unmindful of his own beautiful

maxim, שויתי יי לנגדי תמיד "I have placed the Lord continually before me,"[1] gave full license to a criminal passion, and violated one of the most sacred laws of God, by taking to himself the wife of another. Nor was this all: but as one crime often draws on a second, he aggravated his sin, by making Uriah, the husband on whom this injury had been inflicted, the bearer of the very letter prescribing the manner in which he was to be exposed to certain death. If, however, the transgressions of David were so great as to be almost without parallel in the records of crime, it must also be confessed, that no man ever experienced greater remorse, or manifested more genuine repentance, than the guilty monarch, when the hour of reflection arrived, and when a full sense of his wickedness fell on his stricken conscience. His cries in the agony of his distress, and the bitter lamentations of his wounded and contrite spirit penetrated the heavens; and in consequence of his full confession and sincere penance, the seer Nathan was charged to tell him, that the Lord had so far put away his iniquity, that the forfeiture of his life would not be demanded. But for iniquities of such magnitude there were penalties to be exacted, from which the sinner could not be relieved. The severe reproof, administered by Nathan, appears to imply this: Thou hast violated the sacred tie of marriage; by force and by an abuse of power, thou hast possessed thyself of the wife of thy neighbour; and, that thou mightest shield thyself from responsibility to the only mortal that could call thee to account, thou hast crowned thy adulterous crime by a most bloody deed! Although that thy confession and

[1] Psalm xvi. 8.

thy penance may have saved thy life, remember well, לא תסור חרב מביתך עד עולם "The sword shall never depart out of thy house."[2]

Thus spake the seer in the name of Almighty God; and in the event recorded in the chapter of the text, we see the awful prediction in process of its accomplishment. The first child which Bathsheba bears to David dies; the domestic tragedy of Amnon and Tamar succeeds; and then comes the greatest of all the monarch's trials, the treason of Absalom. An extraordinary revolution, the effects of a conspiracy long hatched in secresy, now takes place. David, the greatest, the most powerful monarch that ever swayed the Jewish sceptre—David, the deliverer of his country from her relentless persecutors, the conqueror of the Philistines, the Amalekites, and the Ammonites—David, who has raised Judea from a dependant and tributary state, to dictate laws to all the surrounding nations, is deserted by his subjects, hurled from his throne, and obliged to go forth from Jerusalem, an exile and a wanderer. Strange vicissitude of human affairs! fearful proof of their instability! It required more than ordinary fortitude to support this cruel reverse of fortune: but worse, far worse, remained behind; and here the iron was made to enter deeply into the soul of the aged monarch. The head and front of this rebellion, the man for whose aggrandisement it was raised, who fomented it and directed its course, and who sought to consolidate his usurped throne, by the blood of its lawful sovereign, was David's own son, his much beloved, his very idol, Absalom. How wondrous, how awful is the retribu-

[2] 2 Sam. xii. 10.

tive justice of God! Let us throw a veil over David's crimes, as well we may, when we contemplate him in his heart-rending troubles, pursued by his unnatural son, whom, intent on parricide as he is, the aged king cannot cease to love with all the fondness of a doating father. Yes, we will suffer the curtain to fall upon David's sins, committed in the lustiness of power, in the meridian sun-shine of prosperity, whilst we can regard him from the point of view afforded to us by the chapter of our text—great (aye, sublime) in misfortune, and pious and submissive under trials, than which no mortal ever had greater to support.

In the confusion produced by the insurrection, the king escaped from Jerusalem with life, and with what he valued even more than life, the ark of God. To a man like David, possessing deep religious fervour, whose piety was a kind of passion, as was indeed every sentiment that alternately filled the breast of this most excitable being, the ark of God was the only thing that could administer consolation to him in his exile. The sanctuary was his delight, wherein to pass a single day was, in his estimation, preferable to spending a thousand elsewhere! Here he could perform his devotions amidst the choir of anointed priests; and, animated by the visible effulgence of the *Shechinah* or Divine presence—here, if anywhere, could his troubled spirit find repose: here it was possible that he might tear himself from the recollections of his departed greatness and sovereign power; and here alone could he hope to escape from the perpetually gnawing grief occasioned by the unnatural conduct of his child.

Zadok, the high-priest, and his assistant Levites,

were, in all probability, influenced by these considerations, when they carried away the ark of God from Jerusalem, and brought it to the dethroned monarch, that it might accompany him in his wanderings and cheer him in his afflictions.

And, now, let us direct our attention to the instructive picture of our text—a great man, sublime in misfortune: and let us honour David as a moral hero, as we can hardly fail to do, when we hear him commanding Zadok, the high priest, השב את ארון האלהים העיר "Carry back the ark of God to Jerusalem." Observe and admire, my hearers, the true piety, the generous self-denial of the Psalmist, and admit the force of what a heathen sage once observed (even though the sentiment be tainted by his polytheistic notions) that "no sight is more pleasing to the gods, than that of a great man struggling with misfortunes." David sends back the ark of God: he voluntarily resigns the privilege of learning the Divine oracles by means of the Urim and Thummim; he foregoes all the satisfaction, the delight, the consolation, which he himself tells us, the sanctuary was alone capable of affording him; because he knows that public worship at Jerusalem must cease if the ark of God be absent from the city. Let us here learn that a great man in misfortune does not suffer his mind to become dark, nor his heart to grow callous or selfish; but that in the lowest depths of grief, as well as in the loftiness of prosperity, he is ready to sacrifice every personal consideration, every thought merely relating to self, for the glory of God, and for the good of mankind! Nor let us mistake the grandeur displayed by David in his misfortunes for the frenzy

or the recklessness of despair. Though bowed down by afflictions, and determined to send back the true sanctuary, in which he could alone expect to drown his grief, he was not without hope, nor indeed is any one bereft of it, who confides in the goodness and the providential mercy of God. "The Almighty is able," saith he, "to bring me back, and to show me again His ark and His habitation." He saw no human means by which he could retrieve his desperate affairs. His whole army, if it deserved that name, consisted of some score or two of attached friends and adherents; whilst the forces of Absalom comprised nearly all the veterans whom David had led to victory in a hundred battles. From strategy, or the artifices of policy, his prospects were even more gloomy, since Ahithophel, the shrewdest of statesmen, the most accomplished of politicians, upon whose counsels next to the Divine oracles David was wont to place the greatest reliance, had gone over to Absalom, as his minister and chief adviser. Even at this stage of the world, David was so sensible of the superiority of mind over brute force, that he feared Ahithophel in the council-chamber, more than he dreaded Absalom and his army in the field. But aware of the power of God to turn any way He pleases the several faculties and talents which He bestows upon man, and also to thwart the development and the particular tendency of those endowments, when they are bent upon evil and opposed to his Almighty purposes, he humbly prostrates himself to the earth and puts up the petition, סכל נא את עצת אחיתפל "that the Lord might be pleased to frustrate the counsels of Ahithophel."[3]

[3] 2 Sam. xv. 31.

But though David had trust in God, in whose power he relied to restore him to Jerusalem and to the throne, if it should appear good in His sight; still he was no less disposed to bend with pious submission to the Divine Will, even if his fortunes should *not* be retrieved. If, saith the king, in the second verse of the text, it should not please the Lord to bring me back, (הנני) "here am I" ready to submit to His all-wise dispensations (יעשה לי כאשר טוב בעיניו) "Let Him do unto me whatever seemeth good in His eyes."

There are no words, my hearers, throughout the whole range of Scripture, which are more worthy of close and attentive consideration, than those to which the poet-king here gives utterance in his severe afflictions: they not only convey to us the character of the speaker, and move us to deep sorrow, that a man so truly pious at heart should ever have fallen before the tyranny of his passions; but they are in the widest sense instructive. Can we carefully read those sentiments and yet fail to perceive the striking contrast which they offer to *our* thoughts and actions, whenever it pleases God to order us to bow our shoulders to burdens which are light indeed, when brought into comparison with those that were weighing so heavily upon the Psalmist? We all have a keen sense of our own sorrows; but if we were to sum up the reverses of fortune that we have had to support from the day of our birth until now, truth would oblige us to admit that, how varied or galling soever they may have been, they have not equalled, in any wise they have not exceeded, the trial of being hurled from a throne to become an exile and a mendicant. And if to our reverses of fortune we were to superadd all our other

afflictions, whether arising from sickness, from helplessness, or what is the most trying, the bereavement of our beloved ones—all these combined could not be weighed against that perpetual torment in an aged father's breast—the thought that the child of his own body has become his enemy and persecutor, and is seeking to stop the breath of him who gave him life. No, my hearers, whatever be our calamities or our griefs, they fall short of those of the Psalmist.

We have seen how David bears himself towards his Maker under these trials: let us now inquire how some of us behave to God and man under visitations of a far lighter character. Instead of manifesting submission, obedience, and religious trust, there be many of us who shroud ourselves in gloom, put on the garb of misanthropy, withdraw ourselves from society, and abandon many an institution in which we were wont to take a lively interest, and whose objects are to give instruction to the ignorant, and relief to the widow, the orphan and the poor. There be many of us who instead of seeking God in our misfortunes with more earnestness than we did before, remove ourselves farther and farther from the consolations of religion; nay, forsake the very house of prayer in which the name of God is published, and where praises are offered for the support which He graciously extends to His creatures; as if we had really determined in our hearts to contend against our Maker, and to withhold our homage on account of the reverses or of the misfortunes which He has permitted to overtake us. Brethren, be assured that we never commit greater folly and sin, than when we seek to fly from God and from man because the gifts of fortune pass away from

us, as though we had no more allegiance to pay to heaven, no more good to perform on earth!

Now, when we inquire into the cause of this ignorance and sin, we cannot be long in making the discovery that they originate in a passion which inflames and devours so many of us, but from which the hero of our text was totally free. They arise from our miserable, our despicable pride, which in prosperity we display to man, and in adversity we impiously manifest to God. O brethren, let us beware, that we show no stubbornness, no pride before God; for most awful are the threatenings contained in the Scriptures against such impiety. When Moses, in the 26th chapter of Leviticus, predicts the evils which will fall upon the Hebrews for their idolatry, he adds, in the name of God, that if, when misfortunes shall have come upon them, they harden their hearts in pride, and withdraw themselves from the exercises of piety, and refuse to receive a father's correction, ויספתי ליסרה אתכם שבע על חטאתיכם "then the Lord will add to their afflictions, and will chastise them seven-fold for their sins."[4] We cannot, with impunity, defy the Lord's power: nor can we measure our weakness against His strength: but one thing we can do, we can submit: and in this submission we can prove to our Maker our fortitude, our nobility of mind, and our firm religious trust; virtues which we should never have an opportunity of developing in all their fulness, if it were not for the afflictions and trials which God in His Wisdom has made incidental to human life. Let the conduct of David, in the time of his troubles, impress us with the lesson that, far from removing ourselves from the

[4] Levit. xxvi. 18.

performance of our duties to God and man, in the season of our reverses and misfortunes, we ought to seek every occasion to humble our proud spirits before our Creator, and to pray to Him to relieve us from our troubles, or, as David says, "If that seem not right in his eyes," to give us fortitude to bear them.

Let us remember that it is adversity which brings out the man, that gauges his moral worth, and shows how much there is in him of the spirit of that Great Being, in whose likeness he is stamped. This truth is frequently referred to in the book of Job; where we find Eliphaz addressing the sufferer in these words: "Happy is the man whom God correcteth, therefore despise not thou the chastisement of the Almighty; for He maketh sore and bindeth up; He can deliver thee in six troubles, ay, from the seventh can He save thee." [5] Be it far then from us to contend with our Maker, and to show a proud and unbending spirit whenever He proves our faith by trials and reverses; but let us strive to emulate the conduct of the hero of our text, who is not only great, but truly sublime, in his misfortunes. If the worldly wealth, for which we have toiled so many years, and for the acquisition of which we have sacrificed so much of our convenience and of our enjoyment, be taken from us; though we may, as mortals, deplore our change of condition, yet we need not plunge ourselves into despair; but we may betake ourselves to Him, who is the Giver and Disposer of all, exclaiming in the spirit of David: "if it be Thy divine will, O Lord, Thou canst restore it to me." And if that supremely wise and gracious ruler of mankind who *alone* knows what

[5] Job v. 17-19.

is best for His children, should see fit to disappoint the hopes which are raised in our breasts; still, confident that whatever the Lord decrees is just and good, we can echo the words of the second verse of our text, הנני יעשה לי כאשר טוב בעיניו "Here am I; let Him do unto me whatsoever seemeth good in His sight."

We may adopt the same pious conduct in sickness, in bereavement, and under every affliction which the Lord may be pleased to lay upon us. It is a lesson essentially practical, taught not only in the words, but at the same time illustrated in the conduct, of a great man in affliction; a lesson which every one of us, at some time or other, will have to practise, if we wish to preserve our faith and our virtue, in seasons of visitation.

And let it not be forgotten, that whilst we are urged to heed the moral of our text by the voice of religion and by a sense of duty, its adoption tends at the same time most materially to advance our interests and to retrieve our position. One of the greatest dangers to be apprehended from our reverses and misfortunes, is that we may be completely overwhelmed. Whatever, therefore, can sustain us in these trying vicissitudes, whatever can preserve the calmness of our mind, and give energy and activity to our several faculties, we ought to cling to as an anchor of safety. Now the conduct pointed out in our text is the only means of keeping us afloat in the storm of troubles; and of permitting us to weather the tempest. It will save us, my friends, if we practise it, even as it saved David in the afflictions referred to in the chapter of our text. He tells us so;

and, in the 55th Psalm, which, according to the profound Kimchi, David composed on the occasion of Absalom's treason, the great man in misfortune gives us this most important and cheering counsel, השלך על יי יהבך והוא יכלכלך "Cast thy destiny upon the Lord and He will support thee."[6]

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[6] Psalm lv. 23.

# IV.

## CONDUCT WITHOUT PRINCIPLE.

*Preached on Sabbath* פי לך לך *October* 31, 5607.

1 Kings, XVIII. 21.

ויגש אליהו אל כל העם ויאמר עד מתי אתם פסחים על שתי הסעפים אם ה׳ האלהים לכו אחריו ואם הבעל לכו אחריו ולא ענו העם אתו דבר

"Then Elijah drew near unto the people and said, How long will ye be limping about between two branches? if Adonai be the divinity, follow him; or if Baal be the divinity, go after him: but the people gave no reply."

The prophet Elijah is addressing, in the words just quoted, the same people and the same court who have hitherto scorned his exhortations, and left unheeded the decrees of retributive justice with which he, in the name of God, has threatened the state for its gross idolatry. He has now, however, a more serious and attentive audience than he was wont to find amongst the degenerate house of Ahab; for the Lord has ceased to forbear, and has commanded a distressing famine upon the land, on account of the impiety of its inhabitants. Throughout the entire history to which the chapter relates, Elijah has well approved himself the servant of the Lord, denouncing Ahab and his court for their abandonment of

the service of God, and for the formal establishment of the Sidonian worship, and foretelling the imminent penalty of a long and destructive drought. A universal distress ensues, but Elijah is especially protected. God appoints him a refuge near the brook that runs into the Jordan, and when the waters of the brook are dried up, the Hebrew prophet finds subsistence within the dominions of his Sidonian enemies. The drought continues, and hope dies in the land. The fruitful plains and the luxuriant valleys of Ephraim and Zebulum lie parched with heat, the fountains, the wells and the rivers are all dry, and there is not provender enough for the king's horses and mules. At this crisis, when death following close on the heels of famine is sweeping away thousands from the earth, and when the kingdom of Samaria is threatened with depopulation, Elijah comes forth from his retreat, braves the fury of Ahab and his court, and makes a last, and happily a successful effort to remove the curse of idolatry from the land, and to bring back the erring sons of Israel to the true and only God. "How long," says he, "will you be limping about between two boughs," as if undecided upon which to settle? The people whom he harangues have no sentiment of love towards God; but the distressing drought with which the land is visited has at least taught them to stand in awe of a Being who has the power to inflict such severe punishment. They cannot, therefore, from very fear renounce his service altogether, neither can they bring themselves to put away the abominations of the Sidonian worship, since that would be breaking with the court, and forfeiting its patronage and its influence. Their

wishes lead them one way, their fears another; and thus are they, to use the figure of the text "limping between two opinions;" and watching a favorable opportunity when they may act, without incurring on the one hand the displeasure of God, and on the other hand, without compromising themselves with the king and sacrificing their worldly interests. We have then before us, a scene of no uncommon occurrence in daily life; nor are fewer men disposed to enact it in our own age than there were in the times to which the chapter of our text refers. Unhappily there are still to be found too many in Israel of abject and slavish spirit, who are content to chain themselves to the car of the rich, to undergo frequent struggles with their consciences, and to fight many a battle with their own sense of right, rather than take a decided course, or even openly avow an opinion that should fail to find favour with their rich friends and acquaintances, the deities of the earth to whom they offer their homage.

Now Elijah feels such contempt for this species of double-dealing, that he does not hesitate to pronounce it unworthy of idolators. Be one thing or the other, says the prophet; be worshippers of the true God, or the slaves of Baal; but do not be so mean in spirit as to suppose that you can serve both, and that you can be loyal and treacherous at the same time. Let us place the words of the prophet before us, and let us endeavour to study them until we convince ourselves of their especial application to matters of religion, and until we perceive the folly and danger of alternating between right and wrong, where the salvation of our souls is concerned. At the period of the world

fixed in the first chapter of the "Parashah" read to day, the whole human family, Abraham and his family excepted, was "limping between two branches" upon nearly every question relating to spiritual truth.[1]

In all their inquiries they groped in darkness; and there being no point upon which their minds could settle with satisfaction or safety, they were constantly alternating between good and evil! But for more than thirty centuries past, the Lord has rendered himself visible, as it were, to the human eye, and accessible to the human mind, by means of the clear rules which he has laid down for our conduct through life, in the books of Moses, so that in no single instance, least of all in matters of religion, need we now oscillate between right and wrong: for through His written word we may all acquaint ourselves of what the Lord our God requires us to perform whilst we are permitted to be His stewards upon the earth.

The contemporaries of Elijah could not, therefore, plead ignorance concerning the way that they should go, nor the things which they should do; much less can any of us of the present time advance such a plea, when the revealed word of God is accessible to every individual who has outlived the period of childhood. It has often been said that we are disposed to look with horror on many sins committed in former ages, whilst we are comparatively indifferent to those which prevail in our own times. Of the truth of this we must all be convinced, when we hear men not of the lowest station in life, and not, it should be

[1] כל אדם שאין בו דעה לסוף נולה "Every man in whom there is no fixed resolution (say our sages) falls at length into perturbation." (Chelek 92. 1).

supposed, utterly reckless of character, openly avow that they feel such or such a line of conduct to be religious and right; but that unfortunately they are not free agents: that if they should be so rash as to act conformably to the convictions of conscience, they might displease some powerful friend, or give offence to some wealthy acquaintance, and perchance lose many worldly advantages which spring out of those connexions. It argues not well for morality, certainly not for a manly independence of mind, that such confessions should be unblushingly made; and, perhaps, the very men who so speak and act, might be discerned amongst the crowd, as those who are most vociferous in their demands for freedom of thought and liberty of conscience. Why, what claim to liberty have such willing bondmen, who take still a delight in clinking the chains of Egypt? What claims to freedom have they whose abject servitude does almost disgrace the mortal tenement in which their mean spirits are housed? Slaves of slaves! — for very conscience' sake they will not incur the penalty of an angry look from men, dust and ashes, like themselves; yet will they sacrifice their self-esteem, the true dignity of their nature, and yet will they brave the displeasure of their Creator, before whose all-seeing eye each of all their secret thoughts is revealed.

Be it known to every one of us, who would profit from the words of the text, that when the Lord endued us with a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and an understanding heart, it was for the glorious purpose, that the operation of those faculties might produce in us firmness of mind to do what conscience dictates to

be done, and to keep ourselves at the post of duty, stedfast, serene, intrepid and erect in the strong conflict of temptation, and under every trial and disappointment through life. This firmness of mind, is a gift not to be lightly esteemed; it constitutes our great distinguishing moral sense, and it urges us to do what we believe to be right without the remotest reference to the favor or disfavor of man ה׳ לי לא אירא מה יעשה לי אדם "If God be with me," exclaims the Psalmist, "why shall I fear; what can man do unto me?"[2] Firmness of mind is intended to be our source of consolation when we act up to our own sense of right, so that to what clime or region soever we may be driven, we may ever feel that the eye of God is upon us, marking our course, and approving our actions, the true and sincere results of our conscientious convictions.

It was this inward satisfaction of having in all things acted agreeably to religious principle, that influenced the muse of the Psalmist Asaph whilst penning the beautiful passage, מי לי בשמים ועמך לא חפצתי בארץ "Whom, O God, have I in heaven but thee, and whom besides thee do I desire on the earth?"[3] "Thy favor is life, thy presence is heaven, the smiles of thy benignity are my chief joy, and the delight of my soul: under thine approving eye I must always be happy; but if thou turn away from me in displeasure, darkness will cover me, and I shall perish in the labyrinth of perplexity and sin"[4].

But the peace of mind and the elevation of sentiment felt by Asaph cannot be experienced by any of us who are constantly limping between two branches,

[2] Psalm cxviii. 6. [3] Psalm lxxiii. 25. [4] Jervis' Discourses.

alternating between principle and expediency, between right and wrong, failing the moral courage—the true genius of Judaism,—whose motto is תמים תהיה עם יי אלהיך "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God"[5]—to act as conscience prompts. Nor should we deserve to experience this inward delight, since we could not advance our claim to any higher motive than that which moved the degenerate Israelites in the days of him, whose words we have borrowed for our text: we should not be in any way morally superior to the gross-minded Hebrews of an anterior age, who, whilst professing themselves servants of God and children of the Sinaic covenant, fell down and worshipped the creatures of their cupidity, shaped out of ingots of gold, exclaiming אלה אלהיך ישראל אשר העלוך מארץ מצרים "These be thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee forth from the land of Egypt!"[6]

There is one point, however, in which the servile-minded Hebrews in the time of Eiijah were superior to us; and it is this—they implied by their silence their consciousness of having done wrong, and they did not seek to excuse conduct incapable of being justified; ולא ענו העם אותו דבר "The people did not answer him by a single word." But there are among us, those who have *reasons* to advance why they depart to the left when their convictions urge them to the right. It is said, that it is unwise to differ from the majority of mankind, and to run counter to the opinion of the mass, and therefore individual opinions, even in matters which constitute a moral distinction between right and wrong, ought to be suppressed, whenever

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[5] Deut. xviii. 3. [6] Exodus xxxii. 4.

their promulgation would create differences. I at once concede that a man may often feel strongly upon certain questions, and yet do well to defer for a time giving publicity to his thoughts: but it should be remembered that "ראשית חכמה יראת יי "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."[7] The suppression, therefore, of our honest opinions can never be justified, if they immediately relate to the moral and social good of mankind, and least of all, when they bear upon the important concerns of genuine religion.

We should act with great imprudence, if we were unreasonably to thrust upon the world notions almost certain to encounter considerable prejudice and opposition, and yet having after all but a remote influence on the true interests of society. But whenever the genuine principles of religion are concerned, involving the acknowledgment and the true worship of God, and the permanent felicity of man, nothing ought to restrain us from adopting and defending them, unless we would render ourselves guilty of mean dissimulation, and of sacrificing what is due to God, at the altar of human pride and of popular prejudice.

But the principal plea put forth for limping between the worship of God and the worship of man is, that the friendship of the rich must be preserved, even at this sacrifice, not so much on our own account as on that of our children, who will require the patronage of the wealthy to assist them in making their way in the world. It cannot be questioned that a plea like this has great force with vulgar minds;

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7 Psalms, cxi. 10.

yet it requires but few words to demonstrate that there is no attempt at self-justification which is more lax in its morality.

We have but very imperfect notions of parental responsibility if we imagine that the primary duty we owe to our children, and which must absorb all other duties is, to provide at every cost for their material comforts. He is no true friend to his children who does not recognise in them powers to be called forth, affections to be cultivated, and principles to be firmly established, of far more value than any earthly treasure that he could bequeath to them: הס כל בשר מפני י״י "Vanish all worldly considerations before God," saith Zechariah.[8] The first care of a good Father is, that his child be a rational and conscientious being; and his chief aim as a parent ought to be to render him a good, rather than a rich man.

To make every provision for children's success in life, consistent with rectitude and principle, is the bounden duty of parents; but it forms no part of parental obligation,—nay it would be committing a sin against our offspring, to train a child to share his homage between God and man, and to act the part of a mean, servile, sycophant to all who might possess a little more wealth and influence than himself. It is rather our duty as parents to teach our offspring to become noble-minded men, to value their character and their independence of mind, and to vindicate the honour of their nature. Let us teach them that the most fragrant spices are not more grateful to the organs of smelling, than is the sweet odour of a manly

[8] Zechariah, xi. 17.

and a conscientious course to the intellectual sense. Let us teach them that steadiness of principle is the foundation of internal peace and comfort, and that without this, life itself were hardly worth possessing. So far, then, from attempting to justify ourselves for alternating between God and man, between right and wrong, on account of the interests of our children, the very fact of our having families, to whom we are required to offer a worthy example, should be our strongest inducement to persevere in the path of conscientious rectitude, so that we may bequeath to them a legacy more precious than gold, that of a name never sullied by double-dealing, of a reputation for genuine religion, never compromised by the worship of man instead of the worship of God.

It should seem, therefore, that the people did wisely, and, let us hope, gave promise of amendment, in refraining from offering any moral justification for a want of principle and of firmness of mind, which in fact cannot be defended.

No apology which we may put forth can at all avail us, since the whole of our plea amounts to this: we prefer servile imitation to the exercise of our reason, we prefer to look through the eyes of others instead of using our own—we prefer our worldly interests to the promptings of conscience. Conduct like this, when considered merely in relation to the ordinary business transactions of life, is truly despicable; but in matters bearing upon religion it becomes a sin of considerable magnitude, a sin nothing short of gross idolatry, because it leads us to make man our deity, instead of the Supreme Creator, the one and only object of worship.

I feel that the text on which I have been commenting, my hearers, is capable of far more development than I have had time to give it. It will not, however, have been offered to your notice in vain, if I shall have succeeded in impressing you with the force of two conclusions, at which the prophet Jeremiah arrives, in reference to the subject discussed to day. The first is

ארור הגבר אשר יבטח באדם ושם בשר זרעו ומן יי יסור לבו: והיה בערער
בערבה ולא יראה כי יבוא טוב ושכן חררים במדבר ארץ מלחה ולא תשב

"Accursed is the man that places his trust in man, that leans for support on an arm of flesh, and withdraws his heart from the Lord. For he shall be like one that is solitary in the desert, and he shall not witness the approach of happiness; but he shall dwell in the parched places of a solitude, in a salt and deserted land."—Jeremiah, xvii. 5, 6.

The second conclusion is

ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח ביי והיה יי מבטחו: והיה בעץ שתול על מים ועל
יובל ישלח שרשיו ולא יראה כי יבא חם והיה עלהו רענן ובשנת בצרת
לא ידאג ולא ימיש מעשות פרי

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, for the Lord will be his refuge. And he shall be like a tree planted near the water side, and which spreadeth out its roots upon the stream; it shall not be affected by the approach of heat, but its leaf shall be ever verdant. It shall have no fear in the year of drought, and it shall never cease to produce fruit."—Jeremiah, xvii. 7, 8.

# V.

## A JEALOUS GOD VISITING THE SINS OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN.

*Preached on Sabbath,* יהרו פּ׳ *February* 6, 5607.

Exodus, XX. 5.

לא תשתחוה להם ולא תעבדם כי אנכי יי אלהיך אל קנא פקד עון אבות על בנים על שלשים ועל רבעים לשנאי ועשה חסד לאלפים לאהבי ולשמרי מצותי

"Thou shalt not prostrate thyself before them, nor shalt thou serve them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

The Decalogue was vouchsafed to us by the Almighty as the basis of our religious and social system; and its development is to be found in the several ordinances, precepts, and judgments which Moses was divinely charged to deliver to the Israelites, soon after the revelation of the Ten Commandments. This fact fully accounts for the remarkable terseness of language, in which the articles of the Decalogue, and especially the latter ones, are clothed. They are to be regarded as general principles, always having reference to certain laws that are closely to follow, as indispensably necessary to form the hearts and regulate the actions of mankind. Although the article of which a portion is taken for our text, is

expressed more fully than any of the other commandments (the fourth excepted); still it does not so much aim at informing us what genuine worship is, as what it is not. And this indeed was the kind of instruction more immediately required by the Israelites, who had passed some centuries in a land, where every species of mental idolatry as well as the worship of sensible objects prevailed.

Having had occasion very recently to consider the second commandment in relation to the duties of public and private worship, I purpose to employ the passage of the text to day for two other objects; first to endeavour to explain in what sense the words אל קנא "A jealous God" are to be received, and secondly and principally, to combat the erroneous impression that "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children" is opposed to the Divine attribute of justice and mercy.

First.—The grand truth of Revelation אנכי ה׳ "that God exists, and that He is One and One only," having been declared, it is immediately followed by the article setting forth, that God, who is the sole Arbiter of our destinies, the Giver of all that we possess, the only Being who can receive our prayers and grant our petitions, has an exclusive right to our faith and our worship. Now to impress this sacred truth on the minds of such a people as the Israelites at the time when they were assembled at Sinai, the Omniscient Lord, in mercy to his children, condescended to employ an expression, as the Jewish commentators happily term it, כלשון בני אדם "suited to the capacity of the meanest mortal" אנכי יי אלהיך אל קנא "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God."

By my will every thing was formed, and by my desire all continues to exist. I am the essential Source of life and light, of wisdom and goodness, of mercy and truth; and so immeasurable is the distance between Me, the Supreme King of kings, and any object, however great, which my hands have formed, that I am jealous of my majesty and of the glory of my name, and will not, therefore, permit the creature to share any portion of the worship which is due to Me the Creator alone. Mendelssohn observes, והנה לא נאמר בהשם יתברך לשון קנאה אלא בעבודה זרה בלבד[1] that the term Jealousy is nowhere found, save in relation to idol worship; against which heinous sin God warned the Israelites in language adapted to their capacities, and best calculated to impress their hearts. Strange as it may seem to us to find the term "jealous" applied to Him that can have no rival, this phraseology seems nevertheless to have struck with singular force the minds of the earlier families of mankind. In the thirty-first chapter of the book of Job, we see the practical influence of the second commandment, and of its peculiar wording.

אם אראה אור כי יהל וירח יקר הלך, ויפת בסתר לבי ותשק ידי לבי, גם הוא עון פלילי כי בחשתי לאל ממעל

"If I had beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon when it walked forth in its brightness, and if my heart had been secretly enticed, or my lips had kissed my hand, this surely were an iniquity to be punished by the judge, for I should have denied the God who is above all these things.

Thus much in reference to the term "a jealous God:" and now let us consider the concluding passage,

[1] Commentary on Exodus, xx. 5.

"visiting the sins of parents on their children." In the context these words evidently refer to *national judgments*, with which the Israelites were threatened if they should suffer themselves to be betrayed into the abominable superstitions of the nations by which they would be surrounded. The Almighty expressly declared that whenever Idol-worship prevailed in Israel, He would withdraw His divine protection from the nation; and this saving strength withheld, they would be given over into the hands of their enemies. The whole volume of Jewish history, and most especially the book of Judges, affords abundant evidence of the accomplishment of this prediction. National judgments from generation to generation were the only monitors which the Hebrews heeded; and it was not until the whole of Judea was conquered and her principal families were carried captives into Babylonia, that idolatry ceased to be practised in Israel.

But I pass from this particular instance where the sins of parents were visited upon their descendants, in order to consider the question in a fuller and more general manner. We all know with what tenacity the sceptic clings to the passage of our text, believing as he does, from the erroneous interpretation which he assigns to it, that it furnishes him with weapons for combating the veracity of the Bible, and for arraigning the justice of God. "How," says the denier of revelation, "how am I to reconcile with divine goodness the doctrine that God will hold me responsible for the sins of my father, or my grandfather, which I could neither prevent nor control." But, my hearers, our text inculcates no such doctrine: it simply declares a fact — of which we all have

experience—that upon this earth the connexion of one generation is so intimate with that which preceded or which will succeed it—above all, the ties are so strong between parent and child, and the views, the opinions, and the actions of the former, have so marked an influence on the latter, that evil committed in one generation, is, from the inherent nature of things, entailed upon its immediate descendants.

We read in Deuteronomy xxiv. 16. לא יומתו אבות על בנים ובנים לא יומתו על אבות איש בחטאו יומתו "Parents shall not perish on account of their children, nor children on account of their parents; but every man shall perish for his own sin." But if, brethren, you would obtain the fullest information with regard to this doctrine, more ample than any I could hope to afford you, though I were to devote to the subject a score of lectures, you should attentively study the eighteenth chapter of the book of Ezekiel. Here you will learn that Judaism holds the *soul* of man accountable to God for the deeds performed by himself *alone* upon the earth; איש כדרכיו אשפט אתכם בית ישראל; "*each* man, according to *his* deeds, will I judge you, O house of Israel;"[2] and that, although in a *natural* point of view society suffers from the evil conduct of individual members, still Judaism is a stranger to the notion of a transfer of guilt, *in a spiritual sense*, from one generation to another. הנפש החטאת היא תמות וכו' "The soul that sinneth shall perish; the Son shall not bear the iniquity of the Father, and the Father shall not bear the iniquity of the Son," צדקת הצדיק עליו תהיה ורשעת הרשע עליו

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[2] v. 30.

תהיה "the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."[3]

The reward and punishment which form the burden of Ezekiel's message are altogether of a *spiritual* nature, and have relation to the soul of man, after the fulfilment of the functions which belong to his earthly career. "Behold," says God, "mine are all the *souls;* the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son; the soul of the sinner shall perish."[4] The very pith of these words consists in their application to the human soul; since, with respect to the body, there is no such difference between the godly and the ungodly. On the contrary, they are both alike subject to dissolution and physical death, as experience was all sufficient to teach; and the Scriptures very often make this natural fact the basis of a moral lesson.

It is quite clear from this eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, that the Israelites to whom the prophet brought the divine message fully believed in the imperishable nature of the soul, and were convinced that the boundaries of earthly life did not close the jurisdiction of Almighty God over man. They did not entertain the false idea that all actions are accounted for on this side of the grave; but some of the people imbibed the error which was then gaining ground,[5] owing to a misconception of the words of our text and of parallel passages, that the sins of the fathers entailed on the subsequent generations a burden of unmerited *moral guilt.* It is to remove this

[3] verse 20. [4] verse 4 [5] See xviii. 2.

important error that God sends Ezekiel on a mission to Israel; and most effectually does the prophet accomplish the divine message by his emphatic address in the chapter just referred to.

We can have no more trustworthy exposition of our text, than that given by God's inspired prophet. From him we learn, that, agreeably to the doctrines of Judaism, every man works out his own salvation, that every one is in direct relation with his Maker, and consequently, that every individual follower of the laws of Moses may safely rely on his own endeavours to deserve the forgiveness and the grace of God, aware as he must be, that the nature of the Supreme Being offers no irresistible barrier to the access of His truly penitent children.

Yet we must be careful not to confound this plain doctrine of the non-transfer of *moral guilt* with the warning of our text in as far as it relates to the natural events of this life. We do not, we cannot, for a moment deny, that the conduct of one generation exerts a powerful influence upon the destinies of the succeeding race. It were impossible that it should be otherwise. A little reflection must fully convince us of the remarkable effects wrought upon all bodies of men by the deeds of those who have preceded them, or with whom they are immediately connected in the social bond. History most plainly tells us that a land stained with violence and fraud does not escape its condign punishment, although ages of splendour may intervene between the period of glory and the day of terrible retribution. The Eternal proclaimed amidst the majestic wonders of Sinai, that, from natural causes in the world "the misdeeds of fathers

*are* visited upon children to the third and fourth generations of them that hate Him;" and it requires but little research amongst the treasures of experience to satisfy us of the constant working out of this truth in the history of the human race.

Compare, if you will, brethren the blessings of liberty and peace enjoyed by the inhabitants of this our native land, rendered great by the virtuous exertions of preceding generations of Britons — compare these blessings, with the turmoil, the strife, and the wretchedness in which the inhabitants of the Peninsula are found, beneath an ever smiling sky, a witness for many years to scenes of torture, persecution, and ineffable horror, and then say, whether a particle of doubt can linger in your minds as to the solemn truth, that "the sins of the fathers are" in a *natural* point of view "visited upon their descendants." But we may bring this principle much nearer to our hearts by regarding its effects in individual cases. If our fathers have neglected our moral and mental culture, it is most sure that we in the present, and, to a certain extent, our children in the next generation, will bear the sins of our ancestors. If our fathers by profligacy have consumed their estates, or by dissipation have rendered themselves subject to diseases which are often entailed, our parents' sins must unquestionably be visited upon us and our children. If you or I, brethren, were so unfortunate as to inherit a name associated with dishonor or guilt, it would be scarcely possible for us, though we should by no means be *morally* accountable, to escape altogether from the *natural* consequences of such guilt or dishonor.

But before the sceptic presumes to arraign God's justice, and to scoff at the eternal laws of heaven, he

might do well to put a case to himself. Let him suppose that a serious wrong or some gross outrage has been committed against him, or one whom he is bound to protect, that he has brought to judgment the perpetrator of the crime, and that on conviction of the offender, punishment ensues. Now of whatever nature the punishment may be, whether a pecuniary fine, a public degradation, or the deprivation of liberty for a long term, in any of these instances the act of the sinner must be visited on his children. But if the unhappy family, deprived of the protection and support of their parent, were to lay all their sufferings at the door of him who prosecuted the criminal, and were to accuse him of being the cause of their father's iniquity falling upon them, he would repel the charge with indignation. He would say, and with great propriety, "It was not I that brought misfortune on these children: it was the natural consequence of the evil-doing of their own parent, with whose destiny they are inseparably allied." But he might add, "If I were to hold them *morally* accountable for their father's sin, then indeed should I be exposed to the charge of injustice and uncharitableness."

Let the case then which I have supposed, serve to illustrate the words of the text. When God punishes a guilty parent, the effects of the divine visitation are, from the very nature of things, felt by the children and the children's children; but does God hold those innocent beings *morally* responsible? Assuredly not, saith the divine prophet, צדקת הצדיק עליו תהיה ורשעת הרשע עליו תהיה "The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

The natural law of visiting the misdeeds of parents on their children carries with it a most instructive moral lesson. The great and good Lord, by whom the heart of man is moulded, has beneficently inscribed on—His eternal Sinaic tables, this homely, but most powerful appeal to the human breast, on behalf of the Law, which is life and happiness to Israel. Accordingly, saith He, as one generation is virtuous and godly, so are its descendants blessed and rewarded upon the earth. But let us not, I repeat, confound this divine enunciation in the Decalogue that God "*doth visit* (פוקד) the sins of parents on the third and fourth generations, and that he *doth show mercy* (עושה חסד) to the thousandth generation," with the revelation of the truth in Ezekiel, that salvation before God is in strict accordance with every man's individual merit. Let us, as reason and scripture require, keep these two truths, equally great and equally clear, separately in view, and then we shall derive from the second commandment the following comforting reflections.

By the conduct we pursue, and the actions we perform, in our own circumscribed day, we create influences which extend themselves through the vast region of the future. The weal and the woe of our descendants are, to a great extent, in our power; and as no emotion agitates our hearts so powerfully as that of affection for our offspring, we recoil at the thought of committing any act, which may prove prejudicial to the peace and welfare of our children and our children's children, whose happiness on earth we utterly wreck by our transgression against the commandments of the holy law, and whose inheritance we waste, although it is our duty to bequeath it to them in a healthful and flourishing condition.

On the other hand, however in this life we may be made to suffer from the misdeeds of others, because of that natural law which renders inseparable the links of the great family and social chain; yet, the gracious Ruler and Judge of the world, from whom we are certain to obtain a full measure of mercy and justice, when after death we appear before His throne, has informed us through His prophetic messengers, that no deed, no thought, which is not properly our own, shall intercept from us the sunshine of His paternal grace. Yea, He hath assured us, that at this time we shall not be responsible for our parents, nor for our children, nor for any acts of a former generation, in which we had no share: in fact, that nothing shall be recorded against us, upon which we have not stamped the seal of our own free will; and that the degree of punishment or reward which supreme justice and benevolence will deem fit to lay upon our souls, will be much or little according to our own deserts.

Brethren, whilst the lesson of to-day illustrates one of the articles of our creed, גומל לאיש חסד כמפעלו נותן לרשע רע כרשעתו "He rewardeth the righteous according to his pious works; He punisheth the wicked according to his evil-doings;" let it impress all of us, who by our position, talent, or influence, may be regarded as examples to others, with this conviction, that our actions whether good or evil, will tell with force on many a future generation. Let the moral be well heeded by parents and guardians, and by public and private teachers. We of the present generation must sow in righteousness, if we wish the generation that will succeed us to reap in mercy.

# VI.

## RELIGION THE FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE.

(*Preached on Sabbath* פ' חיי שרה *November* 22, 5606.)

GENESIS XXIV. 1—5.

ואברהם זקן בא בימים וה' ברך את אברהם בכל: ויאמר אברהם אל עבדו
זקן ביתו המשל בכל אשר לו שים נא ידך תחת ירכי: ואשביעך ביי
אלהי השמים ואלהי הארץ אשר לא תקח אשה לבני מבנות הכנעני אשר אנכי
יושב בקרבו: כי אל ארצי ואל מולדתי תלך ולקחת אשה לבני ליצחק:

"And Abraham was old, and far advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto the aged servant of his house, who had dominion over all that he possessed, I intreat thee to place thy hand under my thigh. And I will make thee swear by the Lord God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that thou wilt not take a wife unto my son from the daughters of the Canaanites amongst whom I dwell. But that thou wilt go to my land and to my birth-place, and wilt there take a wife for my son Isaac."

IN the chapter immediately preceding that from which the text is selected, we have a simple but deeply affecting narrative of the calamity that has befallen the aged patriarch, and converted into a comparative solitude his once smiling and cheerful home. Sarah is dead; the companion of his wanderings, the sharer of all his dangers and trials, the wife of his youth, the well-beloved of his soul, the faithful partner, to whom his conduct through life was marked by the tenderest regard and the sincerest affection.

This was a severe loss to Abraham; but firm in religious trust, he resigned himself to the decree of Divine Providence in this instance, as he did on an occasion of even greater trial, when he bent his course to the mount Moriah, to offer up at the shrine of Faith "his son, his only son, whom he so loved, even Isaac."[1] He could not, however, chase from his heart the image of one so dear to him, nor cease to cherish a fond remembrance of his true and devoted wife, the mother of his darling son; and so at the opening of the סדרה of to-day, we discover the bereaved old man bending fondly over the corpse of Sarah, and seeking vent for the grief of his overburthened heart, in the tears which he sheds for his beloved dead. But sorrow, as well as joy, has its season: and if Abraham had just cause to bewail the loss of a wife, in whose companionship his youth, his prime, and his old age had been passed, he was not unmindful, on the other hand, of the earthly blessings which God still permitted him to enjoy in his son Isaac. Well had he performed a father's part to this child of promise; and he now felt that, before the Lord should call him to yield up his spirit, he had yet another duty to perform to his son.

Though we may highly estimate the several advantages which we enjoy; still there are some blessings whose value we cannot fully appreciate until they pass away from our possession. Most probably this was the case with Abraham, who now, bereft of his partner, felt how all his former happiness was identified with domestic associations, and how much he

[1] Genesis, xxii. 2.

stood indebted for the many delightful years he had spent, to the choice which he had made in his youth of a wife who shared his own sentiments on the important concerns of religion, and whose character was, in every other respect, congenial to his benevolent disposition and to his enlarged views. This accounts, then, for the anxiety which Abraham manifests immediately after the death of Sarah, that his son should enter the married state, and that he should unite himself to one whose early education and pious training might harmonise with the lessons which Isaac had received, and the example that he had witnessed, in the tent of his Parents. The daughters of the most considerable families of Canaan would, beyond question, have gladly accepted the hand of Isaac, heir to the wealthiest and most powerful Sheik of the age. But the wise and thoughtful Abraham sought for his son a wife, who possessed qualifications with which neither outward attractions nor the advantages of fortune could for a moment be compared. Beauty lasts but for a season, and riches cannot of themselves render their owner happy; when personal charms once lose their novelty, and when avarice has indulged to satiety, calm reflection will come, and the marriage alliance which is cemented by such external aids only will soon be weakened. Abraham, therefore, regarded outward charms and great wealth as of minor consideration in the choice of a wife. What he chiefly desired was, that his son should unite himself to one of intelligent mind and of purity and benevolence of heart, to one who would employ her suasive powers for the noblest and worthiest ends, and whose piety would not only endear her to her husband, but would also exert a happy

influence over the children, with which the Lord had graciously promised to bless the marriage of Isaac. "Do not take a wife unto my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I am dwelling," said Abraham to his faithful steward; "suffer him not to contract a marriage with those idolatrous women, whose hearts are not warmed with the sentiments of genuine religion; and who, therefore, fail to bring with them the essential blessing that should crown the married state. But go to my own country and to my own kindred; go to the house where the one and only God is acknowledged and worshipped in spirit, and take to my son a wife who fears the Lord and walks in his ways; for in such a one only can my son Isaac find a partner worthy of his confidence and love."

It should seem, from the chapter before us, my hearers, that even in the infancy of the world, marriage was regarded as one of the holiest and most important of engagements. In fact, the intimate relation in which man and wife are placed, and the serious and responsible duties which this connection involves, may be truly regarded as the substance of the very first moral lesson which God was pleased to teach to man. The tie that unites you in marriage, said the Almighty to the first human pair, is even closer than that which knits the parent to the child! "therefore man leaveth his father and his mother and cleaveth to his wife and they become בשר אחד one flesh."[2] In rights, in privileges, in affection, in confidence, and even in their mutual anxieties and cares, they are one and inseparable; each being equally

[2] Genesis ii. 24.

interested in everything that affects the honor, the happiness and the well-being of the other. How well and how faithfully Abraham acted up to the spirit of the divine admonition, addressed to the first human pair, when they were joined in marriage, may readily be determined from the history of the patriarch, whose conduct to Sarah, during the long period they were spared to each other, is strongly marked by tenderness and devotion, by forbearance and self-denial.

With God's command to Adam and Eve before us, added to the advice and the conduct of Abraham, we are really at a loss to understand how any one who acknowledges the inspiration and the authority of the Bible can seriously talk of marriage as a mere civil contract, and as having no relation whatever to the high concerns of religion. So far from this being the case, the least reflection ought to satisfy our minds, that marriage is the source of nearly all the religious obligations which we are required to discharge in domestic and social life. Nor does scriptural instruction on this important matter close with the divine command to our first parents, and with the example bequeathed to us by the founder of the Hebrew race. The Mosaic code contains many precepts and ordinances bearing upon marriage; and the religious duty of taking wives from among their own people and their own faith is most authoritatively enforced on the Jewish nation. Moreover, the inspired legislator avails himself of every fitting occasion to indicate to his disciples how much the preservation of Judaism will depend on the strict observance of the injunction to Israelites to marry within the pale of their creed, and how fatal will prove the evils which must necessarily arise in families, if the Hebrews

contract marriages with those who are indifferent or opposed to the teaching and the practice of the truths, an adherence to which every child of Abraham is bound to consider as his first and most solemn duty.

It is highly probable that Abraham's wish to see his son united to a woman who fully participated in his religious sentiments, was materially increased by his knowledge of the splendid destiny that awaited his race; but, independently of this consideration, we may safely conclude that what the patriarch had nearest at heart was, the true and lasting happiness of his child. Let then the precept and the example of one of the most pious and enlightened men that ever lived serve to teach us a useful lesson, learned by many, alas! when it is too late; that if we desire to derive peace, happiness and solid contentment from the marriage state, it is indispensable that we establish its ground-work on religious principle. This should be the primal consideration; for, since marriage introduces two beings into a state which involves a life either of happiness or misery, nothing can be of greater moment to the husband and the wife, than that they should originate and continue the solemn contract which makes them "one flesh," in humble reliance on the love and protection of the Almighty, who can alone command peace and affection to dwell with them, and banish from their hearth every cause that might produce difference and recrimination, discord and strife.

Let it not be supposed my hearers, that because the lesson of our text relates to the conduct of a man in the choice of a wife, it does not equally apply to a woman in her choice of a husband. The

risk which the woman runs on quitting her father's roof, and in giving her hand to one who after all is a comparative stranger, is considerably greater than that which is incurred by the man. Should the husband fail to find in his wife that piety, virtue, tenderness and amiability, which he confidently believed her to possess, his disappointment will be bitter, and the home which he had painted to himself as an earthly paradise will be gloomy and wretched. But being enabled to mix much in society, where he can, for a time at least, endeavour to drown his sorrow in the many distractions afforded him, his condition will be far more tolerable than that of the wife who has been deceived in her husband, and who, where she expected a manifestation of the holy sentiments which flow from a pious heart, and the expression of the tender regard always displayed by a man of an affectionate and refined nature, discovers qualities of a totally opposite character. There is perhaps no condition in life, which can surpass in wretchedness the lot of such a wife: she cannot communicate her sufferings to any human being, but must bear them in silence; for she will meet with little sympathy from mankind. The tie which she willed should unite her to her husband is indissoluble; it is so binding, that she is not permitted to disclose the wrongs which she suffers, seeing it would be held as an outrage upon herself to speak reproachfully of one who is a part of her, husband and wife being "one flesh." It should then seem, that it especially concerns a woman to satisfy herself that she is linking her destiny to that of a man who fears God and obeys His word, since religion is the only foundation of those

virtues, which she must seek and find in her husband, if she is to become truly happy in the married state.

In the charge which Abraham delivers to Eleazar he shows his appreciation of the influence which the wife must necessarily exert over the husband, and above all over the children, whose future conduct must depend upon the mother's instruction during those years when indelible impressions are made. It is worthy of note that Isaac fully approved the conduct of his father; and in after years we see him following it to the very letter, in the advice which he gives to Jacob, when he quits the paternal roof.

The Bible invariably represents those marriages as happy which are formed between two persons sincerely devoted to the same creed, whilst at the same time it warns us, by the history of a Samson and a Solomon, of the deplorable evils that arise from unions in which the parties are not linked together by one common bond of faith. Solomon's early years afford us many evidences of his deep and fervid piety; but his marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh was a fatal error. It did not immediately turn away his heart from following after the Lord; but it prepared the way for his subsequent apostasy, by leading him to adopt the practices of the heathens. "And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places."[3] As he advanced in life, he multiplied to himself strange wives; and so entirely was he swayed by their pernicious influence, as to take part in the abominable worship of the Sidonians, and in the obscene idolatry

[3] 1 Kings, iii. 3.

of the Ammonites. We have here, then, the most conclusive evidence of the propriety of Abraham's conduct regarding the marriage of his son. Here we may learn, what indeed every day's experience confirms, that it rests almost entirely with the female sex, to give a moral and religious tone to the circles in which they move; and if woman, conscious as she must be of her influence as a wife and a mother, will exert it for the interest of religion, piety will ever be held in esteem by her family. But if she abuse her power, and show herself indifferent to the faith in which she was joined in marriage to her husband, and if she treat lightly its principles, then will Judaism become a mockery to every member of her household; and her children, far from proving a blessing and a comfort to their parents, will rather reflect a disgrace on them, by the consequences that must ensue from their conduct, which religion does not direct and control.

The Almighty, ever active for our present and future happiness, has been graciously pleased so to order events, that the sentiment of piety should, in the majority of cases, act more powerfully in the heart of the female than of the other sex.[4] Scoffers will no doubt tell us that this arises from the weakness of woman, and from her incapacity to think as profoundly and correctly as man on the subject of religion. But as we cannot subscribe to the theory that woman is in any way inferior to man in point of intellect, we are rather disposed to attribute the piety which acts so powerfully on the heart of the female to the especial goodness of the Lord; and to

[4] נשים מזדרזות במצוות "Women are actively influenced by religion." Shemoth Rabba, ch. 28.

regard it as the chief instrument which His providence employs to promote the happiness and the salvation of the human family. We must all be aware that the religious duties to be performed by woman lie at the very foundation of life; and that the piety of the future race is made to depend upon the earliest instruction which the child receives on the lap of its mother. The occupations of man call him constantly abroad, where he has to exert his industry and his talents for the support of his household, so that, the Sabbath day excepted, he has little or no time to devote to the culture of the hearts of his offspring; and if his condition in life even permitted him to spend more hours at home, still his intercourse with his children in their early years, could not be so frequent as that of the mother, nor could his influence be so direct and immediate as her's. But the duties of the mother are, with few exceptions, exclusively confined to the house; and as she has opportunities, at every hour of the day, of accurately learning the habits and dispositions of her infants, even whilst they are at play; and as she can always embrace the seasonable moment for expressing approval or administering reproof; the first years of her children may be truly said to be altogether under her direction. It would, therefore, be as unreasonable to expect that religion should abide in a family, and work its blessed influence in the hearts of children, independently of the pious teaching and the example of the mother, as it would be to look for an effect without a cause.

Seeing, then, how indispensable it is that religion should be made the foundation of marriage, and seeing also the power which a wife is calculated to exert over the family, for good or evil, according as

she is affected or not by the sentiments of piety; it is earnestly to be hoped, that the lesson which has been learned from the portion of the Pentateuch read to-day, may make a lasting impression upon the minds of young persons of both sexes, who may be disposed to enter into the married state.

Let the text also serve as an instruction to parents who may have daughters to educate, that the qualities to be most prized in a wife,—the qualities which leave personal charms and fortune in the rear—are an enlightened mind and a pious heart; and to this end let the labours of parents be directed. Let the father and the head of the family recommend this subject earnestly to the notice of his domestic circle. Let him constantly place before his daughters the beautiful picture which the Scripture has drawn[5] of the Jewish wife and mother who, though she is occupied in "gathering wool and flax;" though her night is often spent in preparing "food for her household," and though "she does not eat the bread of idleness;" still finds time and opportunity to act as the religious teacher of her children. "She openeth her mouth in wisdom, and the law of piety is on her tongue." Nor is she without her reward; for her husband and children, alike blessed by the influence of her piety, unite in singing her praise. קמו בניה ויאשרוה בעלה ויהללה "Her children rise up and call her blessed, and her husband commends her;" and they exclaim with no less truth than feeling "vain is grace, and vain is beauty: the woman that feareth the Lord is especially to be commended."

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[5] Proverbs, xxxi.

# VII.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

*Preached on Sabbath, January* 27, 5609 (1849).

PSALM XC. 12.

לִמְנוֹת יָמֵינוּ כֵּן הוֹדַע וְנָבִיא לְבַב חָכְמָה

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to Wisdom."

THE Psalm from which our religious lesson for the present Sabbath is taken is one of great sublimity, and, perhaps, among the most instructive in the whole of the collection of תְּהִלִּים. It is assigned, in the heading to מֹשֶׁה אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים "Moses the Man of God;"[1] and in the Chaldee paraphrase, we find it described as the prayer which Moses, the prophet of the Lord, offered up, when the Israelites sinned against the

[1] The tradition claims for Moses the authorship of the consecutive Psalms from 90 to 100, inclusive. (See Midrash Thillim on the 90th Psalm, and Rashi, introduction to his commentary on the same Psalm.) It is interesting to notice, that modern criticism of the boldest school has arrived at a result, which, at least, includes the statement of the Midrash. "The Psalms," says De Wette, "from the 82nd to the 100th, seem all to belong to one author; or, at least, to be the production of one Epoch; the resemblance between them, especially in their style of poetry, being very great (Comment on Psalm 100). It will be remarked, that the next Psalm, i. e. the 101st, again bears the superscription "A Psalm unto David."

Lord in the desert, and provoked the decree, that the whole of the adult generation should die out in the wilderness, and not enjoy the blessings of the land of promise. Some commentators observe, in a fair spirit of criticism, that the heading "Moses the Man of God," does not of itself prove that the Psalm is from the pen of the renowned legislator and the father of the prophets; since משה (Moses) was, in all probability, a very common name amongst the Hebrews; and the words איש האלהים (the Man of God) might have been applied, with the strictest propriety, to any one who was eminent for piety. On the other hand, however, the Psalm has much internal evidence of its having been composed about the period at which it is fixed by tradition; and no form of expression could be more appropriately employed to record the deep sorrow of Moses on contemplating a whole generation destined to sink prematurely to the grave, under the just displeasure of the Almighty, than that which is found in the seventh eighth and ninth verses.

כי־כלינו באפך · ובחמתך נבהלנו : שתה עונתינו לנגדך · עלמנו למאור פניך :
כי כל־ימינו פנו בעברתך · כלינו שנינו כמו־הגה :

"For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee; our secret sins before the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale *that is told.*"

But whoever be the writer of the Psalm, certain it is, that it bears the most genuine and unmistakeable evidences of the sublime ethical philosophy of the early Hebrews. It teaches us some grave, but highly useful and instructive truths, which have not been impaired by time; on the contrary, the successive ages

of experience ought to strengthen the conviction of these teachings being entitled to the serious attention of every thinking man. The Psalm advises us of the comparative nothingness of earthly life, beautifully represented by the flower of the field which בבקר יציץ וחלף "in the morning flourisheth and groweth up," and לערב ימולל ויבש "in the evening is cut down and withereth." It tells us, that the measure of our term here, when taken at the highest, is but "three score years and ten," and that if a constitution of more than ordinary strength be enabled to support the weight of a few years more, these supplementary years, if I might so speak, are almost invariably attended by such physical suffering and mental prostration, that they cause more of sorrow than they give of delight. "I am four score years old" says Barzillai to David; "can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing-men and singing-women?"[2]

This humiliating, but faithful portrait of humanity placed on the canvas, the author of the ninetieth Psalm, with exquisite skill and profound religious sentiment, brings forth in striking contrast that great and all vivifying power, the Creator and Ruler of the world, who *was* בטרם הרים ילדו ותחולל ארץ ותבל "before the mountains were brought forth and before the chaotic mass was marshalled into symmetrical form," and who מעולם עד עולם "from age to age" *will be*. The writer also impresses us, in the fewest possible words, with a sense of our finite condition, and of the infinite nature of God,

[2] 2 Samuel xix. 36.

when he tells us that a "thousand years"—a period which embraces the career of ten of the longest-lived men, are, in the sight of Him who is not bounded by time or space כיום אתמול "but as yesterday." The thousand years pass away like "a watchword in the night."

It is not, however, my chief object to dwell on the poetical beauties of the Psalm, but rather to endeavour to give it, as the writer himself appears to have designed, – a practical tendency. For if, after having followed the Psalmist in his reflections on the Eternity of God, and on the fewness of the days which humanity is permitted to spend upon earth, we seek to know the moral which the "Man of God" had in view, we shall hardly fail to discover it in the prayer which he addresses to his Maker, and which is now placed before us as a text. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom."

I pray you, my hearers, to observe, that the Psalmist does not ask of God to reveal to him how many years he is destined to live, since it would have been presumptuous to seek to know what infinite wisdom has concealed from mortal eye; nor would it at all be beneficial to man that the veil should be removed. But what the sacred writer requests is, in the highest degree, useful and practical; he prays that God should be pleased to dispose him to make a proper use of the time allotted to him on the earth. In other words, he enquires not *how long* he is to live, but *how* to live for the glory of God, for the good of mankind, and for the salvation of his own soul. Nor does the importance of the text, as far as it embodies useful instruction, end here; but it goes on to tell us

that we may derive considerable aid in our enquiry *how to live,* by noting each day as it passes down the rapid stream of time, never again to return, and by taking an account of the purposes to which we have made it subservient. "The man of God," therefore, has something more in view than the mere desire of cultivating a habit of reckoning time, when he implores God to dispose him "to number his days." This is only the means to an end; but the great end itself is made very intelligible in the second hemistich ונביא לבב חכמה "that he might apply his heart to wisdom."

One of the first things that strikes us in this sublime prayer is the immense importance of time. Of all the gifts bestowed upon man this is perhaps the greatest, since by its proper employment we are furnished with the means of maintaining our position, moral and physical, during the brief period of our earthly sojourn; and what is of still weightier consideration, of earning for ourselves that immortal prize, to gain which by the unfettered exercise of our will, God graciously called us to a field of action in the world of men. I take it for granted that no one will for a moment question the importance of time, nor will hesitate to pronounce it one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest treasure he can possess. A very little reflection, however, will convince us, that we do not estimate this gift in proportion to its magnitude, and that we do not employ it with the same wisdom and economy as we are wont to display in the use of treasures which we readily admit to be of considerably minor importance. We are careful of our health, and in that care we show our wisdom, because the

preservation of health tends to lengthen the term of our lease upon the earth, during which we are required to do so much, and to make such ample preparation for a future state. But as of more consequence than even health many of us regard our silver and our gold; and so rigid is the economy which some men practise in the use of these treasures, that it must become a serious matter for them to settle between their consciences and God, whether, such economy can be justified, whilst so much suffering and privation are to be found amongst their fellow-creatures. With regard to time itself, however, the greatest of treasures, we are much more lavish, and often so improvident as to squander away days and weeks and years, without stopping to enquire for what purposes time was bestowed upon us. This folly is the less pardonable, because when we lose our time, we lose what we can never recover. To-day, an attack of sickness may lay us prostrate on our bed, and to-morrow health may return; to-day, some accident in the political or commercial world may oblige us to part with half the wealth we have amassed; and to-morrow may bring back what we have lost and add something to our original store. But it is not within the range of accident, neither is it in the power of man, to call back one hour which the dial of time has registered. Much of our folly in squandering away our time may be attributed to the fact that we are not always duly impressed with the grave truth told by the Psalmist, that the longest life scarcely lasts three-score years and ten;—and, alas! how many of the children of men vanish away before two score, or one score, or even ten years have passed over their

heads! If human life were to extend through many ages, still each day of it, from the time when a sense of right and wrong is awakened in our minds, might be well employed in labouring for our immortal salvation; in such a lengthened term of existence, however, a brief space of time lost might only appear as an atom, as a moment, in an extended career, and might be compensated in the long range of centuries.[3] But in our actual position our whole life is an atom, כי גז חיש; (for it is soon cut off); though we may attain to the age of three-score and ten or even of four-score years, our march is so inconceivably rapid, and its motion appears to be so much accelerated the nearer we approach our end, that at the termination of this full mortal career, we feel that we have only been permitted to rise to the surface of the world for a brief moment, and that we are almost immediately ordered to sink back again. Say then, my hearers (for the subject now under consideration concerns us all, and addresses itself to every age—to the child, as well as to the man of grey hairs, and more especially to youth, as will presently be shewn) — say, my hearers, whether we act as wise men or as good Israelites, when we thus abuse God's most precious gift, and when we mis-employ those days which were graciously bestowed upon us for the improvement of our minds, for the education of our hearts, for acts of benevolence, for useful and industrious occupations, and for qualifying ourselves for our eternal state — and whether we do not stand convicted before God, when conscience

[3] See Massillon on "the employment of time."

reveals to us the melancholy truth, that instead of making a proper use of our time, we waste it in idleness, in enervating pleasures, in frivolous amusements, in neglect of duty, and therefore in sin?

But it is vain to mourn over what is irrecoverably lost, how much soever we may feel the blame to rest upon ourselves. Whilst, therefore, no complaint can be more natural than that which we hear from the adult of having ill-spent the precious years of his childhood, or from the man of grey hairs of having failed to put to profit his years when his strength was mature and unimpaired and his intellect was in full vigor; still such lamentations serve no useful purpose, except in as far as they excite the attention of those who are at the starting post of life, and induce them to be warned of the dangers into which others have fallen, and by being thus warned, to escape them.

I fear, then, that none of my hearers advanced in their career, who have failed to employ well their time, can derive all the advantages which the lesson of our text is intended to confer, however they may be induced to turn to better account the few years that are left to them. The full and complete benefit of this day's scriptural lesson can only be reaped by those who are at present in the season of youth, and who may be wise enough to resolve to make each day give a satisfactory account of the good that it has accomplished. To you, then, my youthful hearers, I do most especially recommend the advice of the text. I affectionately admonish you to echo the prayer of the psalmist, and to implore God to teach you "to number your days." As each succeeding night sets in, and as you turn to your Creator to implore His

gracious blessing and His providential guardianship, say to yourselves, "I am a day older; I have a day less to live; I have a day more to account for to Him who will assuredly demand of me how I have employed one of the greatest gifts which He has vouchsafed to bestow upon me. What has this day produced me? Has it imparted to me any information that I did not possess before, has it, either in literature or in science, carried me a single round higher on that ladder which can only be climbed by means of patience and good temper, of industry and perseverance? Has it taught me better than I knew before, what I owe to my God, to my parents, to my teachers, and to all those who are so kind as to assist me in my childhood, and to perform for me those important and indispensable services which I could not discharge for myself?" But you must not, my young friends, stop at these inquiries, since you will without doubt have remarked, that the psalmist has something more in view; he desires to apply his knowledge, or, as he says, "to apply his heart to wisdom." You must therefore, heed the spirit of his prayer, and to all the interrogatories you have put before, you must superadd another question; and I think you will agree with me, that it is by far the most important one. Have I become better at the close of this day than I was yesterday? I have added something to my knowledge; but have I turned it to a good use? I have learned that it is commanded by God that I should love Him as my Creator and Protector, and that I should fear Him as my sovereign and my judge, who knows all that I have done and left undone, and is even acquainted with the thoughts that rise in my heart,

but have I really profited from this instruction? Has it disposed me to gain the love of my heavenly Parent by leading a life of piety and truth, by obeying without a murmur all the charges that my good parents have laid upon me, by being attentive to all that my teachers have urged upon me, and by gaining their approbation? Have I this day been kind and grateful to those who are employed to help me, have I been courteous and civil to the servants of the house, have I conducted myself with amiability and evenness of temper, have I been affectionate and forbearing to my brothers and sisters, and have I cheerfully practised some self-denial for their comfort and happiness? Have I shewn a disposition of love to my fellow-creatures and to those who stood in need of my services, and have I felt and acted in the spirit of that great truth, that we are all the children of one God, and that therefore we are bound to do as much as lies in our power to make each other happy?"

These, my young friends, are the objects for which you are recommended "to number your days." It is not to be expected, if you fairly put to yourselves the foregoing questions that you will always receive satisfactory replies. We are all liable to go astray from the path of religion and duty, and to commit through excitement, passion or inadvertency many faults, of which we feel ashamed in the hour of calm reflection. But the course recommended by the psalmist will assuredly bring us back from our errors and wean us from our failings; for if on taking an account of our day, and discovering that instead of having passed it in a holy and useful manner, we have either wasted a part of it in idleness, or stained it

by the commission of some sin against God—we at once resolve to retrieve ourselves to-morrow by amendment, and we honestly act upon that resolution—we then not only restore ourselves to the love and grace of God; but in our past error, now atoned for, we have an additional guarantee against our falling again into the same transgression.[4] Be attentive, then, my young friends, to the lesson of the text, "Number your days;" and forget not the end for which this recommendation is given, "that you may apply your hearts to wisdom."

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[4] Beautiful indeed is the Talmudic idea, that *repentance* was pre-existent to the creation of the material world. As soon as there was a material world, sin became possible; but the mercy of God had prepared an antidote for the time when it would be wanted. ה"ק"ב"ה" הקדים רפואה למכה "God sent the remedy before the evil." (Megilla 13.) "Great is the glory of repentance," said R. Abuhu, "for it existed ere the world was created." (Midr. Thillim. Psalm 96.)

# VIII.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL PROVED FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES.

*Preached on Sabbath, March* 5, 5602 (1842).

Ecclesiastes xii. 7.

וישב העפר על הארץ כשהיה והרוח תשוב אל האלהים אשר נתנה׃

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; but the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, upon which the whole system of revealed religion rests for support, is here set forth in plain and concise terms, which defy all the ingenuity of sophistry to assign to them any other rational interpretation. The text establishes a complete distinction between the body and the soul; of the former it is asserted, that it "shall return to the dust as it was;" and of the latter, that it "shall go back again unto God." As the body contains all that is material in man, so, says the Scripture, it is destined to revert to its native element; but, according to the same infallible authority, the spirit *does not* sink into the earth, but returns to "the God of spirits."[1]

[1] Numb. xxvii. 16.

It is not my present purpose, brethren, to consider the doctrine of the text abstractedly, but rather to invite your attention to some of the numerous passages, bearing upon this important teaching, which are scattered throughout the several books of our Holy Scriptures. I embrace the earliest opportunity afforded me, after our Synagogue has been constituted, to enter upon this task; because I hold it a duty especially incumbent on the Jewish pulpit, to endeavour to remove the erroneous idea which many, who are not of our faith entertain, and not unfrequently urge upon *us*, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not taught in our Scriptures, but that it was introduced some four centuries after the Jewish canon was closed.

It is at once admitted, that the allusions, which are found in the Pentateuch, to the immortality of the soul and to future rewards and punishments, are less direct than those which occur in the later scriptural writings. The reason, however, is obvious. The Lord made choice of the Abrahamic race in order that they might become instrumental in bringing all mankind to acknowledge the One and Only God, and to live conformably to His moral decrees. To this end, it was indispensable that the rewards which the Jewish people earned when they observed the Divine laws, and the punishments which they merited when they forsook the precepts of their Maker, should be visible and evident to every capacity. It would have told with little force upon the ignorant multitude of Israelites that had just been emancipated from Egypt, and it would have produced no amendment in the hearts of the surrounding nations of idolators, if they

had been urged to lead a holy life on the sole assurance that they would meet their reward in a future state. It was indispensable in those early times to address the senses, as well as to impress the heart; and no better, and no more convincing evidence could be then given to mankind of God's approval of virtue, and of His abhorrence of vice, than that which was made so clearly demonstrable in the national prosperity which the Hebrews enjoyed whilst they held fast to the Divine commandments, and in the national afflictions to which they were subjected when they deviated from the precepts which the Lord had enjoined upon them.

Of all the religious systems that have been introduced into the world, that of Moses is the only one which bases its claims to Divine inspiration on living and palpable proofs. "Receive what I teach you, and practise it, and rely with confidence on the Lord's favour in a future life," is the unvarying language of all those who have sought to be accredited as the inspired prophets of Heaven. But whilst Moses is promulgating his code amongst a people who he takes for granted (as will presently be shewn) are impressed with a belief in a future state, he subjects the doctrines, which he is commissioned to teach, to proofs so obvious, so real, and so totally removed from the pale of philosophising and metaphysical speculations, that no one but the true messenger of God could bear the tests which these proofs would necessarily impose. At every period of your history, says Moses to the Israelites, God will furnish incontestable evidences of the inspiration of the code which He has charged me to disseminate amongst you—proofs not

confined to individuals who cannot rivet the world's attention, but which shall extend to the whole Jewish nation. Amongst these incontrovertible evidences, my hearers, I might remind you of the "Schechinah", which abode in the sanctuary, and the "Urim and Thummim," by which God's holy will was made known: and, advancing later into Jewish history, I might also call your attention to the astounding fact, that no instance is recorded of the Canaanite enemies, by whom the Jews were surrounded, and with whom they were engaged in perpetual feuds, having taken advantage of the absence of all the males of Israel at Jerusalem, on the three festivals of the year, to attack possessions which could then only be defended by women and children. Here, then, we have a strong and convincing proof, that he who delivered the commandment, "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord,"[2] and who added the promise, "No man shall covet thy lands when thou goest up to appear before the Lord thy God three times in the year,"[3] must have spoken the words of inspiration. The same argument applies to the institution of שנת שבתון, "the Sabbatical year," which never would have been observed by a nation of agriculturists, unless the pledge given by Moses, that the year immediately preceding שנת שבתון "should bring forth increase for three years,"[4] had been fulfilled.

When, therefore, we consider the absolute necessity that existed in the times of Moses for enforcing obedience to the laws and precepts which he was appointed to teach, by means of visible and temporal

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[2] Exod. xxxiv. 23. [3] Ibid. 24. [4] Levit. xxv. 21.

rewards and punishments, we can be at no loss to determine, why the references of the Pentateuch to the article set forth in our text, should be less direct than those which occur in the other Books of our canon. But we have only to unclasp our Bibles, and attentively peruse the Five Books of Moses, and we shall soon discover there such strong indirect allusions to the immortality of the soul, that it will be scarcely possible for any unprejudiced person to deny the fact, that this important doctrine must have been universally received by the Jewish contemporaries of the legislator.

The first instance which I shall adduce is from the initial chapter of the book of Genesis. When "the heavens and the earth were finished and all their host;"[5] and when the earth was clothed with verdure, and replenished with every necessary for subsistence and comfort; the creature for whom all this preparation was made, is introduced upon the page of Holy Writ, in these words, "And God created man in His image; in the image of God created He him."[6] We need not ask, to what "the image of God" refers; but it especially concerns us here to ascertain, what sense these words conveyed to the Hebrews, to whom they were addressed, in the times of Moses? Could they have impressed the Israelites with the notion, that a *material* likeness of God was referred to? It would be contrary to all probability to arrive at such a conclusion, since we find the legislator urging, again and again, upon his hearers, the important truth, that God has no corporeal image, nor any bodily form

[5] Gen. ii. 1. [6] Ibid. i. 27.

whatever. "When the Lord spake to you," says he, "out of the midst of the fire, you heard the sound of words, but you saw no similitude."[7] And, again, "Now let your minds heed well, that you saw no similitude on the day when the Lord spake to you out of the midst of the fire; lest you corrupt yourselves, and make unto you any image, the similitude of any figure, the form of a man or a woman."[8] This teaching of Moses is so positive and clear, that the Israelites could not have supposed him that promulgated it, to attach any sense of materiality to the words "image of God." To the Hebrews, therefore, בצלם אלהים (the image of God) must have had a spiritual signification, conveying the idea, that the soul of man is a portion of that Divine spirit which never dies.[9] Another strong evidence of the belief of the

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[7] Deut. iv. 12. [8] Ibid. 15 and 16.

[9] Since no one can doubt, that the writer of the Book of Genesis, and the people to whom that history was transmitted, fully believed in a *just* God, who fails not to reward those with whom He is pleased; it must be admitted, that the third chapter of Genesis, in which the fratricide of Cain is narrated, is clearly demonstrative of the belief in the immortality of the soul, both in the mind of the historian, and of the people for whose instruction that book was professedly written. If the sacred historian could be supposed to have known only of *earthly* rewards for the virtuous, what force could his advice to act conformably to God's will have possibly had upon his hearers, seeing that the very first recorded instance of a pious act involved the immediate death of him whose conduct had found favour with the Deity? Now, as the writer of Genesis ascribes meritoriousness to Abel, who, notwithstanding, died immediately after, *and in consequence of*, the very act which rendered him entitled to reward, there is no escaping the admission, that such reward must have been understood by the historian to lie in store for Abel in the subsequent stage of his soul's existence.

Jews in a future state, and in the existence of man after he quits the earth, may be found in what is recorded of Enoch; ויתהלך חנוך את האלהים ואיננו כי לקח אותו אלהים "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."[10] The only exegesis which we can assign to this verse is, that Enoch for his piety was suffered to pass into another state of existence without experiencing the pain of death.

We have, also, a remarkable and convincing passage in the ninth chapter of Genesis, where we find a prohibition against suicide, in the significant words that God holds man responsible for taking away his own life[11]; ואך את דמכם לנפשתיכם אדרש "And surely the blood of your own lives will I require."[12] If the early Israelites had no belief in the immortality of the soul, and that it was responsible after death, this passage would be shorn of all rational explanation; but as the words of Scripture are the words of God himself, and must have been addressed to man for a wise purpose, we can assign to them no meaning which does not involve the fact, that a belief in a life hereafter prevailed among the Hebrews whom Moses addressed.

The thirty-seventh chapter of the Book of Genesis forms another important link in the chain of indirect evidence, in favour of the belief of the Hebrews in the immortality of the soul. When Jacob is informed of the death of Joseph, the sacred narrative represents the patriarch to say, ארד אל בני אבל שאלה "I shall

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[10] Gen. v. 24. [11] Ibid. ix. 5.

[12] את דמכם לנפשתיכם אדרש זה ההורג עצמו (Maimonides ג׳ הלכות רוצח ב׳).

sink mournfully into the *Sheol* to my son."[13] Now, either Jacob believed in the immortality of the soul of Joseph, or he did not. If he did not, how could he express himself so confidently, that he should rejoin his son, who, as Jacob seriously believed, *had been devoured by a ferocious beast*, and who, consequently had no *material Sheol* at all, in which the sorrowing patriarch might meet with him again? But since Jacob certainly *did* expect to be with Joseph in the *Sheol*, it follows that this *Sheol* could, by no means whatever, have been regarded by Jacob, or the people to whom the Book of Genesis was delivered, as a material or earthly sepulchre.

Let me now direct your attention, my hearers, to the passage " he was gathered to his people," which occurs very often in the Pentateuch, and which the learned Dr. Munk regards as one of the evidences of the belief entertained by the Israelites, from the earliest times, in a state of being beyond this life. It has been generally supposed, that " to be gathered to one's people," is an ordinary term which the sacred historian employs in order to convey the idea, that

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[13] Gen. xxxvii. 35. The Hebrew, word, " Sheol," which is rendered, in the authorised English version, sometimes by " the grave," and sometimes by " hell," has been variously explained. Modern lexicographers are unanimous in deriving it from שׁאל=שׁעל, to be " hollow," comparing it with the words *Cælum, Hell, Hölle;* all formed from roots that express the idea of " hollow." Still, it must be confessed, that שׁאל nowhere occurs in any form with that meaning; whereas, on the other hand, there appears to be nothing unreasonable in placing it under the Hebrew root שׁאל, *to demand*, or *to enquire*, which would affix to it the import of the *place*, or rather the *state* of " enquiry," or " examination."

the person to whom it is applied lies buried in the place where the remains of the members of the same family are deposited. But whoever attentively considers all the passages of the Bible where this expression occurs, will find, says Dr. Munk, that being "gathered to one's ancestors," is expressly distinguished from the rite of sepulture. Abraham is "gathered unto his people;" but he is buried in the cave which he bought near Hebron, and where Sarah alone is interred."[14] This is the first instance where the passage "to be gathered to one's people" is to be met with; and that it cannot mean, that Abraham's bones reposed in the same cave with those of his fathers is very clear, since the ancestors of the patriarch were buried in Chaldea, and not in Canaan. The death of Jacob is related in the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis in the following words; ויכל יעקב לצוות את בניו ויאסף רגליו אל המטה ויגוע ויאסף אל עמיו "And when Jacob had finished charging his sons, he gathered up his feet upon the bed, and he expired, and was gathered unto his people."[15] It is equally certain, that the phrase, "he was gathered unto his people," cannot refer to the *burial* of the patriarch; because we learn from the next chapter, that he was embalmed, and that the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days: and it is only after these three score and ten days of mourning are ended, that Joseph transports the remains of his father to Canaan, and inters them in the cave of Macpelah, where the ashes of Abraham and Isaac repose. When the inspired penman alludes to the

[14] Reflexions sur le Culte des Anciens Hebreux, par S. Munk (Bible de M. Cahen), Paris, 1833. [15] Gen. xlix. 33.

actual burial of Jacob, he uses very different terms. He makes no mention then of the patriarch "being gathered to his people," but he simply employs the verb קָבַר "to bury:" ויעל יוסף לקבור את אביו "And Joseph went up to bury his father."[16] The very words addressed by Jacob on his death-bed to his sons, אני נאסף אל עמי קברו אותי אל אבותי "I am about to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers,"[17] afford us sufficient evidence, that the speaker, as well as the persons addressed, understood the expression, "being gathered to one's people," in a sense totally different from that of being lodged within a tomb.

But a stronger instance still may be advanced.[18] The Israelites arrive at Mount Hor, near the borders of Edom, and immediately is issued the divine command, "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, for he shall not come into the land which I have given to the children of Israel.[19] . . . Strip Aaron of his garments, and clothe in them Eleazar his son, ואהרן יאסף ומת שם And Aaron shall be gathered, and there he shall die."[20] No member of his family lay buried on Mount Hor; and still Aaron is said to have been there "gathered to his people." Again, Moses is charged to chastise severely the Midianites for having seduced the Israelites to follow the abominable practices of בעל פעור ("Baal Peor"); and this act accomplished, the legislator is told, "that he will be gathered unto his people."[21] This passage cer-

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[16] Gen. l. 7. [17] Gen. xlix. 29. [18] Reflexions sur le Culte, etc., (Munk). [19] Num. xx. 24. [20] Ibid. 26. [21] Ibid. xxxi. 2.

tainly cannot mean, that Moses was to be gathered in the grave with any of his people. The Hebrew lawgiver died on Mount Abarim; and the Scripture testifies, "that no one ever knew of the place of his sepulchre;"[22] and still the term, "to be gathered to his people," is here likewise employed.

Sufficient instances have now been cited to prove, that האסף אל עמיו is to be understood in a different sense from the rite of sepulture, and that the Hebrews in the times of Moses *did* entertain the belief in another state of existence, where spirit joined spirit after the death of the body.[23]

I will refer to one more passage only in the Pentateuch, which clearly shows, that the people to whom it was addressed must have believed in the existence of the soul after death. לא ימצא בך מעביר בנו ובתו באש קסם קסמים מענן ומנחש ומכשף : וחבר חבר ושאל אוב וידעני ודרש אל המתים, "There shall not be found amongst thee any one that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, that practises divination, consults times and serpents, or a magician. Nor an enchanter, nor any one that consults Ob or Yidoni, nor who interrogates the dead."[24] The concluding part of the above passage strictly prohibits the practice of necromancy; and such a prohibition would not have been necessary, if the belief had prevailed

[22] Deut. xxxiv. 6. [23] Reflexions sur le Culte, etc. (Munk).

[24] Deut. xviii. 10, 11. Too much stress can hardly be laid on the fact of the prohibition of necromancy, a superstitious practice, which could not possibly exist amongst a people unacquainted with, or disbelieving in, the immortality of the human soul. The practices also of such witches as her of Endor, prove that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was fixed in the minds of the people.

amongst the Hebrews, that the soul perished with the body.

In the book of Job, which many trustworthy critics assign to the times, and even to the pen, of Moses, we have another powerful testimony in favour of the immortality of the soul. The writer of this sublime poem places in the mouth of the patriarch Job, who is labouring under the most intense suffering, one of the strongest expressions of faith in the imperishability of the spirit that are to be met with in the pages of Holy Writ:—

ואני ידעתי גאלי חי
ואחרון על עפר יקום :
ואחר עורי נקפו זאת
ומבשרי אחזה אלוה :
אשר אני אחזה לי
ועיני ראו ולא זר
כלו כליותי בחקי

" For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that the last upon the earth He will stand; and after that this disease shall have destroyed my skin, yet out of my flesh I shall behold God. That which I shall perceive is for myself; and mine own eyes shall behold, and not another's, though my reins within me are consumed."[25] Job is here represented as declaring his conviction, that *in his spirit* he shall behold his Maker; for מבשרי ought to be rendered " out of," or " independently of my flesh," and not " in my flesh," as it is given in the authorised English version of the Bible.

Passing from the volume of the Pentateuch to the later biblical writings, we shall find the doctrine

[25] Job. xix. 25—27.

of the immortality of the soul set forth in more direct terms, and more fully developed. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, employs a phrase in her exquisite prayer, which not only points to the belief in a future existence of the soul, but likewise in the resurrection of the body: יי ממית ומחיה מוריד שאול ויעל "The Lord ordereth death and bringeth to life; He bringeth down to the *Sheol*, and He bringeth up."[26] Another instance, shewing that the immortality of the soul was a popular belief amongst the Hebrews, may be found in the twenty-fifth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. A simple-minded woman, named Abigail, proves herself not only well-informed of the doctrine of a future state, but she likewise expresses her belief, that after death an essential difference obtains between the souls of the godly and those of the wicked.

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[26] 1 Sam. ii. 6. Hannah here echoes the words of Moses, who, speaking in the name of God, exclaims אמית ואחיה "I kill and I bring to life" (Deut. xxxii. 39); hence, it is tolerably certain, that she understood the original passage to refer to the immortality of the soul. That this was the interpretation assigned to the words of Moses a very short time subsequent to the close of the Jewish canon, is plain from the composition of אתה גבור, the only part of the "Amidah," excepting the first blessing, called אבות, which has a claim to such remote antiquity. The portion אתה גבור is as follows: "Thou art mighty, O Lord, for ever: it is Thou who revivest the dead, and art mighty to save. Thou sustainest the living by beneficence, quickenest the dead with great mercy; supportest the fallen, and healest the sick; Thou loosenest those who are in bonds, and Thou wilt accomplish Thy faith unto those that sleep in the dust. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord of Mighty Acts, or who can be compared unto Thee, O King, who orderest death and bringest to life, and causest salvation to spring forth? Thou art faithful to revive the dead. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who bringest to life the dead."

In her interview with David, she laments the persecution he has suffered at the hands of Saul, and says, "Though a man has risen up to pursue thee, and to seek thy life; still the soul of my lord will be bound up in the treasury of life, whilst the souls of thine enemies will be slung out *as out* of the middle of a sling."[27]

The testimony which the Book of Psalms adduces in favour of the doctrine of a future state, and of a reward and punishment beyond man's earthly life, is important in the highest degree. The national belief of a people seldom or never fails to appear in their popular hymns and ballads; and as the Hebrews do not seem to have had any lyric poems, except those which are chaunted to the praise of the Deity, we can scarcely desire any better evidence concerning the theology that was popular amongst the Israelites than that which is afforded us in the volume of Psalms.

In this Book, there are no prophecies, nor any expressions capable of being construed into what modern interpreters call "a double sense." It offers no field for theological speculations. The volume of the Psalms is simply a collection of praises, thanksgivings, and supplications, in which priest and levite, prophet and judge, ruler and subject, and, in fact, every member of the house of Israel joined; and for many centuries it constituted the only formulary of

[27] 1 Sam. xxv. 29. Maimonides, Manasseh Ben Israel, and several other Jewish commentators, consider the reward and punishment, of which Abigail speaks, to refer to a future state. The celebrated Christian scholar and critic, Pocock, views this passage in a similar light.

the Hebrews. If, then, this collection abounds in references to the immortality of the soul, we may reasonably conclude, that the doctrine was not peculiar to the few writers by whom the Book of Psalms was composed; but that it must have been an essential portion of the creed of every Israelite that took part in the worship of the Holy Temple.

We read in the sixteenth Psalm, "Thou wilt not abandon my soul to the *Sheol*: Thou wilt not suffer that which is precious to Thee to see corruption. Thou wilt make known to me the path of life: in Thy presence is the fulness of joy, on Thy right hand beatitude everlasting."[28] In the twenty-third Psalm, we find David representing the Lord as watching over His people, and, like a kind shepherd, tending His flock. The Psalmist pours forth the expressions of his gratitude for the merciful goodness manifested towards him, and he implies that his hopes in a state after death are so firmly established, that "he is prepared to pass through the valley of the shadow of death without fear of evil," confident, as he is, that he shall be permitted "to abide with the Lord for ever."[29] In the thirty-first Psalm, David, in the full confidence that his soul is immortal, resigns himself into the hands of his Maker. בידך אפקיד רוחי פדיתה אותי י׳ אל אמת "Into Thy hand I do commit my spirit. Thou wilt redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth."[30]

In the same Psalm, it should seem that the pious bard has been contemplating the blessings of immortality; and the thoughts which he directs to his everlasting reward, so completely overpower his

[28] Psalm xvi. 10, 11. [29] Ibid. xxiii. 4 and 6. [30] Ibid xxxi. 6.

soul, that he breaks forth in rhapsody: מה רב טובך אשר צפנת ליראיך "O how abundant is Thy goodness which Thou hast treasured up for those that fear Thee!"[31] The fifty-sixth Psalm presents David to our notice as a prisoner of the Philistines, and in hourly expectation of death; but his confidence, that he shall still continue to abide with God, is unabated. "This I know, that God is with me. In God I boast His word; in the Eternal I boast His word. In God I trust, I will not fear what man can do unto me. Upon me are the vows which I make to Thee. I will acquit myself to Thee with offerings of gratitude." כי הצלת נפשי ממות הלא רגלי מדחי להתהלך לפני אלהים באור החיים "For Thou hast preserved my soul from death (hast Thou not preserved my foot from slipping?), that I may continue to walk before God in the light of life."[32]

But let us pass over other detached passages, in which this book abounds, in order that we may consider the 73rd Psalm, ascribed to the pen of Asaph, and which is in itself a complete sermon on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The poet sets out with the proposition that God is good and just; אך טוב לישראל אלהים לברי לבב "Surely God is bountiful to Israel, to those that are of pure heart."[33] But in the very next verse he leads us to suppose that there was a time when he wavered in this belief, and he also tells us upon what grounds; ואני כמעט נטוי רגלי כאין שפכה אשרי: כי קנתי בהוללים שלום רשעים אראה "Now as for me, my feet had well nigh slipped, my steps had almost staggered: for I envied the thought-

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[31] Psalm xxxi. 20. [32] Ibid. lvi. 4—8. [33] ver. 1.

ess when I contemplated the prosperity of the wicked."[35] He could not reconcile the prosperous state of the ungodly with the justice and goodness of the Almighty; and he was, therefore, led to doubt whether, in the eyes of God, virtue had a superiority over vice. אך ריק זכתי לבבי וארחץ בנקיון כפי "Is it then in vain that I have purified my heart and washed my hands in innocency."[36] The Psalmist tells us that these reflections filled him with sorrow; ואחשבה לדעת זאת עמל היא בעיני "When I considered that I might understand this, it was most painful to me."[37] But when were his doubts removed? Not until he had seriously reflected upon the end of the wicked. "Not," says he, עד אבא אל מקדשי אל אבינה לאחריתם "not until I had penetrated unto the sanctuary of God, so that I might understand their latter end."[38] Yes, when he went to God's sanctuary, and inclined his ear to the Scriptures which were read and expounded at the altar, he was led to view the affairs of this world in a truer light. He now perceived that what he had envied in the possession of the wicked was mere vanity, as the end would demonstrate, whilst the sufferings which the righteous patiently endured upon the earth would finally be compensated by an eternity of glory and happiness. And mark the change that this discovery works in the mind of the Psalmist! He grows ashamed of the ignorance in which he had so long remained concerning the ways of Providence. ואני בער לא אדע בהמות הייתי עמך "I was a fool; I knew nothing; in relation to Thee I was like a brute;"[39] and he now feels confident that he shall ever remain

[35] ver. 2 & 3. [36] ver. 13. [37] ver. 16. [38] ver. 17. [39] ver. 22.

with God, who will here lead him with divine counsel, and hereafter receive him with glory. "Now shall I be constantly with Thee; Thou wilt hold me by my right hand. By Thy counsel Thou wilt lead me, and afterwards Thou wilt take me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and whom but Thee do I desire upon the earth? My flesh and my heart will perish; but God is the rock of my heart and my portion for ever."[40] Every one that attentively studies this Psalm will soon discover, that it clearly develops the doctrine of a future state, in which God will make full amends for the unequal distribution of burdens, which He wisely permits to take place in this life of pilgrimage.[41]

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[40] Psalm lxxiii. 23—27.

[41] Several scriptural passages are to be found, especially in the book of the Psalms, in which the inhabitants of the *Sheol*, or the place of the dead, are spoken of, as unable to praise God. (See Psalms vi. 6, xxx. 10; and lxxxviii. 11, et. seq. cxv. 17.) These passages, however, offer no contradiction to the Scriptural doctrine of the immortality of the soul. In all those texts the Psalmist appears to reason on the principle, that the only return which man can make to God for His mercies and favors is, to offer to Him unceasing thanks and praises, which may bring to the knowledge of His mercies those who *do not* know Him: and it is well worthy of note that the verbs ידה and הלל, which occur in all those passages, especially include the idea of a *public* thanksgiving. For this, however, there would be no opportunity, if the sufferer were cut off in the midst of his afflictions. It is also necessary to observe, that all the texts in question occur amidst prayers for deliverance from pressing and threatening evils. This view will derive much support from a consideration of the wording of Psalm cxv. 16-17, where the heavens, the earth, and the grave, are respectively assigned to God, to man, and to the dead; it does not follow, however, that God ceases to be Himself on the earth, nor that man ceases to be himself in the grave.

In the writings ascribed to Solomon, frequent reference is made to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The following are among the most forcible passages: בארח צדקה חיים ודרך נתיבה אל מות "In the way of righteousness there is life; and in the path thereof there is no death."[42] אל יְקַנֵּא לבך בחטאים כי אם ביראת יי כל היום: כי יש אחרית ותקותך לא תכרת "Let not thine heart envy sinners; but do thou live every day in the fear of the Lord. For assuredly there is a hereafter, and thy expectation shall not be cut off."[43] כי את כל מעשה האלהים יבא במשפט על כל נעלם אם טוב ואם רע "For every deed God will enter into judgment, concerning every secret thing, whether it be good or evil."[44] אשר חטא עשה רע מאת ומאריך לו כי גם יודע אני אשר יהיה טוב ליראי האלהים אשר יראו מלפניו "Though the wicked do evil a hundred times and be spared: yet I know that it will be well with them that fear God, and who do Him reverence."[45] ודע כי על כל אלה יביאך האלהים במשפט "And know that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment."[46] Nor must the highly important passage, which is chosen for the text, be forgotten. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; but the spirit shall go back unto God who gave it." With these evidences before us of the belief which Solomon had in a future state, we can well understand why, of the two great events which begin and end the history of man in his present state, the wise king should have pronounced the day of death preferable to the day of birth.[47]

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[42] Proverbs xii. 28. [43] Ibid. xxiii. 17, 18. [44] Eccles. xii. 14.
[45] Ibid. viii. 12. [46] Ibid. xi. 9. [47] Eccles. vii. 1.

That a popular belief prevailed amongst the Israelites in the immortality of the soul, as well as in the resurrection of the body, is evident from the writings of the prophets of Judah, whose imagery is drawn from both of these doctrines. Isaiah, after bewailing the thousands of his people whose blood has been shed by their hard-hearted rulers, exclaims, יחיו מתיך נבלתי יקומון הקיצו ורננו שכני עפר כי טל אורת טליך וארץ רפאים תפיל "Thy dead ones shall live again, O my dead ones, they shall arise: Awake and shout, O ye that sleep in the dust, for thy dew is a vivifying dew, and the earth shall cast up her dead."[48] These words cannot allow of a second interpretation. The admission is freely made by Bishop Lowth, who says "The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was at that time a popular and common doctrine; for an image which is assumed in order to express or represent any thing in the way of allegory or metaphor, whether poetical or prophetical, must be an image commonly known and understood; otherwise it will not answer the purpose for which it is assumed."[49]

Again, all the imagery employed by Ezekiel in his famous prophecy of "the dry bones," is drawn from the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me forth in the spirit of the Lord, and He led me into the midst of the valley, and behold it was filled with bones. And He caused me to pass round about them, and behold they

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[48] Isaiah xxvi. 19.

[49] Lowth on Isaiah. Notes on 26th Chapter.

were numerous upon the face of the valley, and they were extremely dry. Then said He unto me, Son of man, shall these bones live again? And I replied, O Lord God, Thou knowest. And He said unto me, prophesy concerning these bones, and say thou unto them; O ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God to these bones; Behold I will cause a spirit to come again into you, and you shall revive. And I will bestow sinews upon you, and I will cover you with flesh, and I will spread a skin over you, and I will place in you a spirit and you shall revive, and you shall know that I am the Lord."[50] . . "And He said unto me, prophesy unto the spirit; prophesy, O son of man, and say unto the spirit, Thus saith the Lord God, O spirit, come from the four winds, and breathe upon those dead ones, that they may revive. And I prophesied as He had commanded me, and the spirit entered into them, and they lived again, and they stood upon their feet, a very, very, numerous host. And He said unto me, Son of man, these bones denote the whole house of Israel; behold they say, our bones are withered, our hope is lost, we are cut off. Therefore prophesy, and say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Lo, I open your graves, and I bring you up, O my people, from out of your graves, and I bring you to the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up out of your graves, O my people, and when I place my spirit in you and you live again, and when I place you on your land; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. I have spoken, and I will perform, saith the Lord."[51]

[50] Ezekiel xxxvii. 1—6. [51] Ibid. ver. 9—14.

It is probable that this prophecy was principally intended to impart confidence to the Hebrews in captivity, that they would be restored to Judæa; and that the "dry bones" express the withered hopes of the exiles. The imagery, however, employed by Ezekiel, affords the most ample proof, that the Jewish mind was fully impressed with the important religious doctrines, to which the language of the prophet so plainly refers.

I will quote one more passage only from the volume of Scripture. ורבים מישני אדמת עפר יקיצו אלה לחיי עולם ואלה לחרפות לדראון עולם: והמשכילים יזהירו כזהר הרקיע ומצדיקי הרבים ככוכבים לעולם ועד "And multitudes who are sleeping in the dust shall awake; some to an enduring life, and some to shame and to an enduring contempt. And they who have been wise shall be resplendent as the brightness of the firmament, and they who have led many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."[52]

From the writings of the Apocrypha we have also the fullest evidence, that the doctrine of a future state was as much a portion of the belief of the Israelites as any article of their creed. We read in Maccabees — a work composed nearly three centuries before the vulgar era — "And when he (an Israelite who was tortured) was at the last gasp, he said, 'Thou like a fury takest us out of the present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up again, who have died for His laws, unto everlasting life;'"[53] and, again, "It is good being put to death by men, to look for hope from God to be again raised up:"[54] also in the

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[52] Daniel xii. 2—3. [53] 2 Maccabees, vii. 9. [54] Ibid vii. 14.

same chapter,[55] "Assuredly the great Creator who found out the beginning of all things, will also give you breath and life again, as ye now regard not your own selves for His sake."

From the various passages which have been cited, you will perceive, my hearers, that the Hebrews may well put in a national claim to the doctrine of a future state. We may unhesitatingly declare, that it was the teaching of Judaism in the times of the Patriarchs, and in the days of Moses; that it was spiritually developed by the later Prophets with the development of the spirit of the Mosaic code; and that at every period of our history, it has been considered the great principle upon which Jews have built their faith and rested their hopes. If this sublime doctrine has been spread abroad to the ends of the earth, and inculcated in a manner worthy of the Deity, it must, in the first instance, be attributed to the Hebrews whom God chose to be His Divine agents. Every exalted idea bearing upon a future state, is borrowed from the Hebrew scriptural records; and nothing has ever been advanced with regard to this doctrine, so as to recommend it to rational piety, which was not known to the Jews at the time when their Scripture canon was closed.

[55] 2 Maccabees, vii. 23.

## IX.

## ON THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE ABUNDANT HARVEST.

*Preached on Sabbath, October* 16, 5608 (1847).

Brethren, on the first day of last סכות (Tabernacles), the festival which was annually held in Judæa after all the produce of the ground had been gathered in, I endeavoured to direct your attention to the plenteous harvest which lay in the broad fields of this country, almost ready for being housed, and to excite your gratitude to Almighty God for the rich blessings which He had in store for us. Since that sermon was delivered, it has pleased our gracious Sovereign, the Queen, to appoint a general day of thanksgiving, to be held to-morrow, which is kept as a Sabbath by the great majority of our countrymen. But as we solemnize our Sabbath on the *seventh* day of the week, we are desirous of manifesting our obedience to the commands of our beloved Monarch, by carrying into effect her pious intentions on *this* day, when all Israelites assemble for public worship.

The text which I have selected for the present discourse, and which forms part of the especial form

of thanksgiving to be read at the conclusion of our Morning Service, will be found in the sixty-fifth Psalm, at the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses.

פקדת הארץ ותשקקה רבת תעשרנה פלג אלהים מלא מים
תכין דגנם כי כן תכינה: תלמיה רוה נחת גדודיה ברביבים
תמוגגנה צמחה תברך: עטרת שנת טובתך ומעגליך ירעפון
דשן:

"Thou hast visited the earth, and fertilised it with abundant showers: Thou hast enriched it with the mighty river, abundant in water: Thou hast prepared their corn, yea, so hast Thou ordained it. With copious streams Thou hast watered the ridges of the earth: Thou hast settled its furrows: Thou hast made it soft with showers: Thou hast blessed its produce. Thou hast crowned the year with Thy goodness, and thy pathways drop down plenty."

Praise or thanksgiving, properly considered, is not a mere exercise of the mind, nor an arrangement of ideas expressed in words; but it is the natural language of the heart, poured forth in the full conviction of the benefits which our heavenly Father deigns to bestow upon us. It follows then, that praise and thanksgiving cannot be commanded at pleasure. We can be masters of our time and of our wealth, and we may freely dispose of our talents and of our several possessions; but we cannot command our affections. To praise God with effect, we must be fully impressed with a sense of His merciful kindness; and an intense love must be kindled in our breasts for Him who is our greatest and our truest Benefactor. Hence genuine praise consists more in what the heart feels than in what the lips utter. Though we are frequently enjoined in the Scriptures to solicit God's

protection and heavenly guidance, and to entreat earnestly His divine forgiveness whenever we deviate from the precepts of His sacred law; still, in the volume of the Pentateuch, we find but two occasions on which we are commanded to offer unto God praise and thanksgiving; and in all probability such an ordinance would not have been issued, if it were not that man's gratitude would naturally be aroused on both occasions to which the commandment refers. The first instance is the חג הבכורים (the season of first fruits) when the inhabitants of Judæa would reap the first fruits of the land,[1] and when the early crop indicating the abundance which was to follow, would fill the hearts of a people, wholly dependant upon agriculture, with sentiments of joy and of pious thankfulness. The second instance relates most probably to the autumn[2] or as the Hebrews called it חג האסיף "the season of ingathering," when, under the blessing of an All-gracious Providence, fertility would attend the steps of the field labourer, and abundance would follow the pruning hook, or, to speak in the phraseology of our text, "the year would be crowned with God's goodness, and the pathways would drop down plenty." Here again, men's gratitude and praise would be spontaneous. Indeed, the Israelites could hardly resist the native impulse of thanksgiving and adoration to the Supreme Being, when they witnessed the sensible manifestations of His loving kindness, and when they considered how faithfully He had fulfilled His gracious promise, "For the Lord thy God is about to bring thee to a good

[1] Deut. xxvi. 1—15.

[2] Deut. viii. 10.

land, a land of water-brooks, of fountains and deep springs, issuing in the valley and in the mountain: a land abounding in wheat and barley, and in the vine, the fig, and the pomegranate; a land of olives, of oil and honey: a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, and in which thou shalt lack nothing."[3] Deeply affected by such transcendent goodness, the Israelites must have regarded it less as an obligation, than as a privilege for which their souls thirsted, to fulfil the Scriptural injunction, ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את יי אלהיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך "And thou shalt eat and be satisfied, and thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good of the land, which He hath given thee."[4]

As it is our purpose to offer in public congregation this day a solemn thanksgiving to Almighty God, let us inquire, brethren, whether there be connected with the present season, any peculiar circumstances which are calculated to stamp this act as the spontaneous expression of our gratitude and love? We shall perhaps be better prepared to determine this question, after we shall have directed our attention to a few important facts connected with the history of the past as well as of the present year.

The sermon preached here on the first day of Tabernacles, treated at some length on the important moral ends which ensue from the fact of some years being more, some less, prolific than others. Over the same ground I need not go again; but I merely desire to recall your attention to the substance of the Scriptural verses which then constituted our text.[5] In

[3] Deut, viii. 7, 8. [4] Ibid. viii. 10. [5] Joel ii. 23—27.

this passage it is set forth, that when the Lord sees fit, in His omniscience, to smite the earth with His rod, and to arouse mankind, by means of trials and afflictions, to a sense of their duty and of their dependence upon a great and superintending power, He needs not call up a foreign foe to bend the bow or to dart the javelin, nor needs He command the aid of the warrior, of his chariots and his horsemen. Varied and inexhaustible are the means which the omnipotent Lord can summon into operation; since He can invest the smallest, the most insignificant object of creation, with a power at once destructive and invincible. The Lord can marshal a fearful army from the ranks of הארבה הילק והחסיל והגזם "the locust, the caterpillar, the cankerworm, and the palmerworm," and He can direct the attacks of this host against the fruit of the ground and the fruit of the tree, so that there be not left "either corn, wine or oil, the increase of kine, or the flocks of sheep."[6] Such was the visitation that lighted upon the kingdom of Judah, under the reign of one of its idolatrous sovereigns, when, as the prophet Joel records, יתר הגזם אכל הארבה ויתר הארבה אכל הילק ויתר הילק אכל החסיל "What the palmerworm left the locust had eaten, and what the locust left the cankerworm had devoured, and what the cankerworm left, had been consumed by the caterpillar."[7] This passage is clearly descriptive of an absolute famine, an event (God be praised!) very different from the visitation which this empire experienced last year.

[6] Deut. xxviii. 51.

[7] Joel i. 4.

We had no severe famine or drought. The corn was spared, and so were nearly all the fruits of the trees. The cankerworm confined its ravages to a single vegetable root of comparatively modern growth in this kingdom; and yet how calamitous were the consequences, and how much privation and suffering were entailed upon many thousands of our fellow-creatures! The spirit of benevolence, ever active in Britons in the hour of need, was instantly aroused, not only in the bosoms of the rich, but in every one who had a loaf to bestow upon a famishing brother. And on this occasion, the hallowed sentiment of philanthropy was not restricted to the inhabitants of our own island; but its influence was also felt on the banks of the Hudson, and on the shores of the Caribbean. All who spake the same language as our suffering countrymen, combined by their generous efforts to mitigate the prevailing distress; but the united alms of thousands could but very partially compensate for a single vegetable production, upon which the Lord, in His wisdom, had suffered a poisonous breath to blow. Moreover, the evil was not confined to Ireland, the part of the empire where the potatoe blight had chiefly occurred; but it communicated itself also to England and Scotland. The voice of complaint and of lamentation was universal: the cost of every edible article was enhanced; bread, the staff of life, was placed almost beyond the reach of the poor, and privation and misery penetrated into the dwellings of hundreds and thousands of our labouring population. Although every scene of woe that was offered to the public gaze immediately attracted the attention of the benevolent, still many of our fellow-

creatures must have pined away, whose distresses were only known to themselves and to the All-seeing God.

It was felt throughout the country, that the time had arrived when it behoved the nation to prostrate itself before Almighty God, the Great Disposer of events, and to solicit His especial aid at this season of calamity, and hence was set apart a day for humiliation and prayer; and almost at the same hour there ascended to Heaven a voice of supplication from every church, chapel, and synagogue in the land. It was not a cry of distress in famine, which in England was but partially felt; but it was a voice of solemn and fervent prayer, that the next harvest might be so abundant as to compensate for the scarcity of the former year. And never was there greater need for putting up this petition to Him that heareth prayer: for, considering the sufferings that had already ensued from the failure of a root which constitutes the principal food of some hundreds of thousands of our fellow-creatures, every one became justly apprehensive of the serious consequences that must arise, if the coming harvest should fail to carry with it the blessing of abundance.

The spring advanced, but it brought no hope to the agriculturist; and the summer had completed more than half of her course, without encouraging any further expectation, than that even if the earth should yield an average crop, the harvest would needs be one of the latest in the memory of man. Such were the views entertained by short-seeing mortals, and which views, indeed, were but too well strengthened, by a succession of chilling rains, and

the sluggish appearance of vegetation. The consequence was, that food of every description continued to increase in price; and what the poor obtained with great difficulty at the end of the last autumn, was removed farther and farther from their reach, as the spring of the present year closed, and the summer advanced.

But the rich blessing of the Lord descended upon this land as graciously as it was unexpected by man; and as plainly as the prophet Haggai uttered to his contemporaries the Divine message, so plainly did the voice of our Merciful Father in Heaven speak to us through the bright sunny days, and through the fructifying heat which had suddenly set in: העוד הזרע במגורה ועד הגפן והתאנה והרמון ועץ הזית לא נשא, מן היום הזה אברך. "Though the seed be yet in the barn; though as yet the vine and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree have not brought forth; still from this day I will bless their produce."[8] Thus did Almighty God, the Benefactor of man deign to be merciful to the soil, and to the creatures for whom it furnisheth a table; and thus did He, as our text says, "prepare their corn, bless the produce, and crown the year with plenty;" thus did He accomplish the prophetic prediction, ושלמתי לכם את השנים אשר אכל הארבה הילק וההסיל והגזם חילי הגדול אשר שלחתי בכם ואכלתם אכול ושבוע, "And I will make compensation to you for the years in which the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the cater-

[8] Haggai, ii. 19.

pillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent amongst you; and you shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied;"[9] and thus has the abundant harvest accorded to us, awakened an universal sentiment of gratitude, and fulfilled the inspired words of Scripture, כי כארץ תוציא צמחה וכגנה זרועיה תצמיח כן יי אלהים יצמיח צדקה ותהלה נגד כל הגוים. "Verily, as the earth puts forth her tender buds, and as the garden maketh her seed to germinate, so will the Lord God make manifest charity, and *excite* the praise of all nations."[10]

It has already been observed, that at the time when that day of humiliation and prayer was appointed last year, men's minds were not so much troubled on account of the evils then existing, as in consequence of the fears generally entertained at the prospect of another deficient harvest. But, my hearers, if it could have been foreseen that in the commercial world was awaiting us an alarming crisis, which would sweep away the possessions not only of individuals, but of large classes of men; which would hurl many merchant princes from the thrones of eminence that they had so long occupied, into the abyss of ruin and despair; which would paralyze public credit, arrest the action of the mill and the spinning-jenny, and turn out of employment many thousands of our operatives who were wont to find a market for their industry in our leviathan manufactories: then, indeed, our supplications for an abundant harvest would, if possible, have been more urgent.

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9 Joel ii. 25—26.

10 Isaiah, lxi. 11.

Every one that assisted at the solemn service which took place on the day of the general humiliation, earnestly deprecated a deficient harvest which might follow upon the scarcity of the preceding year. But we could hardly have found expressions sufficiently fervent, in which we might present our supplications before the Lord, if the probability had crossed our minds, that to the foregoing evils might be superadded a commercial panic, spreading wretchedness, suffering, and desolation, to an extent which no human foresight could reach.

Most fervently then does it behove us, my hearers, to pour forth the expressions of our thankfulness and praise to Almighty God, for the abundance with which He has been pleased to crown the harvest of this year. In the present bountiful in-gathering we recognise a two-fold blessing vouchsafed unto us by a Gracious Providence: first, because it places the necessaries of life within the reach of the masses of society; and, secondly, because it must needs mitigate, to a very considerable extent, the mischiefs of a crisis which, in the majority of cases, has been produced by the improvidence, the reckless speculation, and the insatiable avarice of mankind. Whatever, therefore, be the ordeal through which the commercial community may be destined to pass, we have at least the consoling assurance that there is bread for the hungry and seed for the sower, and that the supplies for animal existence will not fail us this year. In the misfortunes which we have brought upon ourselves through our violation of the tenth article of the Decalogue, we certainly cannot find a greater indemnification—how little soever we may deserve

it—than in the fact that we are blessed with a rich in-gathering of the fruits of the ground, since it will not fail to inspire us all with a degree of confidence and courage, and enable us to bear up against our trials, and ultimately to overcome them; whilst, in the absence of the blessing of abundance of corn, gloom and despair would universally prevail.

Although various subjects have been crowded into the limits of this brief discourse, still I venture to hope that each matter for reflection has been set forth with sufficient clearness to lead us all to the conclusion, that the duty of a public thanksgiving, in which we are about to engage, is one that we may enter upon with that free expression of grateful praise, which must naturally spring in the heart of every creature towards the Bounteous and Merciful Sovereign of the universe. Let us calmly review, brethren, the subjects to which our attention has been directed; let us contrast scarcity with abundance; the cry for bread, with the satisfaction expressed by the poor whose table is provided; in other words, the present year with the former. Let us also compare what is now passing in this country with what might, and beyond doubt would have happened, if besides the misfortune of a commercial panic, we had had to contend against a scarcity of food; and we shall all find ample cause to send up the offering of our thanksgiving, and the tribute of our heartfelt praise, to that Gracious and Beneficent Being, whose eye is ever directed to the children of His love, and whose Merciful Providence hovers about us, and furnishes a remedy for our woes when all human aid is unavailing.

But let us not be unmindful, that in order to render our thanksgiving as complete as the Bible requires it to be on an occasion like the present, we must add to the duty of prayer that of almsgiving to the poor, whom the Benignant Creator commends to our sympathies. It will be perceived from the Book of Deuteronomy,[11] that at the thanksgiving which took place among the Hebrews in olden times on "the Feast of First-fruits," as well as on "the Feast of In-gathering," the poor and the stranger, and the widow and the fatherless, were ever treated as the objects of the tenderest sympathy and regard. Brethren, let these creatures of affliction be present to our thoughts this day, and let them be generously dealt with, according to the relief which it is in our power to dispense, איש איש כמתנת ידו כברכת יי אלהיך אשר נתן לך "Every man as he is able, in proportion to the means which the Lord has placed at his disposal;"[12] and whilst we shall fulfil the benevolent intentions of our Sovereign the Queen, as expressed in the order of Council, we shall also obey the commands of the Great King of kings, who enjoins us פתח תפתח את ידך לאחיך לעניך ולאבינך בארצך "to open our hand generously to our brother man, to the poor and the needy of our country."[13]

And if any of you, my hearers, suffering from the losses which the present crisis has entailed, in a greater or less degree, upon all commercial men, should be disposed to regard the present time as a season when you should preserve what you have, rather

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[11] Chap. xvi. [12] Deut. xvi. 27. [13] Deut. xv. 11.

than give from your diminished stores, I pray you to consider well, that you can never render your practice of charity an offering so grateful to your Maker, as when the act imposes upon you some self-sacrifice. Give then, my brethren, in a generous and religious spirit, and remember the words uttered by the Royal Psalmist, "Before Thee are riches and honours, and Thou rulest over them all. With Thee are power and strength, and with Thee it rests to make great, and to give might to all. Therefore, O God, we give Thee thanks, and praise Thy glorious name. For who am I, and what are my people, that we should possess the means to make this offering, since all comes from Thee, and we only give Thee back Thine own?"[14]

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[14] 1 Chron. xxix. 12—14.

# X.

## ISRAEL'S VOCATION.

A Lecture on הפטרת בראשית

*Delivered on Sabbath, October* 1, 5603 (1842).

Isaiah xlii. 18—21.

החרשים שמעו והעורים הביטו לראות: מי עור כי אם עבדי
וחרש כמלאכי אשלח מי עור כמשלם ועור כעבד יי׳:
ראות רבות ולא תשמור פקח אזנים ולא ישמע

"O ye who are deaf, listen: and O ye who are blind, look that ye may see. Who is blind but my servant, and who is deaf like the messenger whom I have sent: who is so blind as he who should be perfect, who so blind as the servant of the Lord? You see many things but you heed not; you open your ears, but you do not attend."

I take my text for to-day, and purpose to do so for some successive sabbaths, from the Haphtaroth of the week, with the view of inducing you, my hearers, to direct your attention to the study of the prophetical and hagiographical books, which are replete with passages of religious instruction and of spiritual consolation. The text just quoted constitutes a part of the Haphtarah of this day.

Before I enter upon the present task, it may be well to offer a few words, for the instruction of the youthful members of the Synagogue, on the origin of the Haphtaroth, or "the sabbath prophetical por-

tions." Agreeably to the injunction of Moses, the book of the law was appointed to be read publicly on the year of שמטה or "release," before the assembled multitude of men, women, and children. "Assemble the people," says our immortal legislator, "the men and the women, and the children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, in order that they may listen and in order that they may learn, and that they may fear the Lord your God, and that they may observe to perform all the words of this Law."[1]

The Mishna[2] has preserved the programme of this solemnity which took place in the year of "release," on the festival of Tabernacles, when the Israelites were assembled at Jerusalem, and when the king performed the office of public reader; and the same traditional authority makes mention of those portions of the book of Deuteronomy which were selected for the purpose. This public reading took place every seven years during the festival of Tabernacles (סכות); but it must not be supposed that the Israelites were suffered to pass so long an interval without hearing recited various portions from the sacred volume, since it was divinely commanded that the book of the law should be studied and meditated on by day and by night.[3] A plan was therefore introduced, but at what precise period it would now be difficult to determine, by which the whole volume of the Pentateuch was divided into fifty-four weekly sections, to be read one on each sabbath during the intercalary year, which included a thirteenth month (אדר שני); but two weekly sections were to be occasionally read

[1] Deuteronomy xxxi. 12. [2] *Sotah*, sect. 7. [3] Joshua i. 8.

on the same sabbath during the ordinary year, which consisted of twelve lunations. This custom appears to have prevailed until Judæa fell under the dominion of Antiochus Epiphanes, who about the year 170 before the vulgar era, prohibited the Jews, on pain of death, from publicly reading the Pentateuch in the holy temple. An edict so cruel and persecuting, which aimed at nothing short of burying in oblivion all the doctrines and precepts of the Sinaic covenant, and of replacing them by the idolatrous superstitions of the Greek religion, which Antiochus was so desirous to propagate, could not fail to be received by every pious and zealous Israelite with feelings of the deepest sorrow. But as the edict was directed against the books of Moses only, and did not extend to the prophetical and hagiographical writings, our ancestors immediately set about selecting from the other scriptural books such portions as appeared to them to offer some analogy to the contents of the section for each sabbath; and as long as the tyrannical decree of Antiochus was in force, these prophetical portions were read aloud in the temple in the place of the weekly sections of the Pentateuch. When it pleased the Lord to free the Israelites from this oppressive rule, the holy law of Moses was again read as usual from sabbath to sabbath; but the prophetical portions which had been recently introduced were also retained. Our Fathers were perhaps led to continue these scriptural readings as a historical memento, or, as is still more likely, on account of the religious instruction and consolation which they afforded to the worshippers at the temple; and hence these Haphtaroth

form a part of the sabbath service of every Jewish congregation unto the present time.

Let us now direct our attention to the Haphtarah of to-day. The portion opens with a message to the Israelites from God, who announces Himself as the Architect of the world: בורא שמים ונוטיהם רוקע הארץ וצאצאיה נותן נשמה לעם עליה ורוח להולכים בה "Who created the heavens, and stretched them out; who spread abroad the earth, and the produce thereof; who giveth breath to the people upon it, and animation unto everything that moveth upon it."[4] Every hearer will at once perceive the analogy between the opening verse of this Haphtarah and the first chapter of the book of Genesis, which describes the creation of the heavens and of the earth out of chaos. The Lord having declared Himself the Great First Cause, proceeds in the next verse to remind the Israelites why He was pleased to make choice of the Abrahamic race, and to distinguish them above all the peoples of the earth. It is here clearly set forth that God selected the Hebrews as a nation of teachers, that they might convey the blessed truths of revelation to their fellow-men, of all nations and of all climes, and that they might become to future ages what the patriarch Abraham had been to the people of his own generation. The vocation of Israel is especially defined, as if the inspired Prophet who delivers God's oracle would say, "Thou hast not been appointed to thy important office, O house of Jacob, on account of thine own merits, or for the narrow purpose of

[4] Isaiah xlii. 5.

rendering wise and happy thine own people, to the exclusion of all the other families of men; but קראתיך בצדק 'I have called thee in righteousness,' in grace and in compassion, for the benefit of the human race, and not for a fraction of the world's inhabitants only. Thy vocation was not conferred upon thee, O my people, that thou mightest wholly indulge in the animal gratifications of life, that thou shouldest find a soft pillow upon the earth for thy head, or idly revel in the bounty of the creation; receiving all, and communicating nought to thy fellow-mortals. No; the Lord hath called thee to an active and useful end, and thy business lieth in the world of men." אתנך לברית עם לאור גוים "I appointed thee," saith the Holy One, "for a covenant unto peoples, for a light unto nations;"[5] לפקח עינים עורות להוציא ממסגר אסיר מבית כלא יושבי חשך "to open the eyes of the blind, to bring forth the captive from confinement, and from the dungeon those that dwell in darkness."[6]

Now when we see the destiny of the Abrahamic race so clearly predicted in the pages of inspired Scripture, we are naturally led to inquire whether the avowed purposes of Heaven have been fulfilled through the medium of the Hebrew people; and if so, in what spirit the sons of Jacob have executed the holy work which was assigned to them. It must be evident to every reader of the Bible, that the Israelites were required to be God's *willing* agents, in order to carry into effect the grand scheme of mercy and love, which was intended for mankind at large. This was indeed the primary condition of the covenant at Sinai. "If

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[5] Isaiah xlii. 6. [6] Ibid. ver. 7.

you will obey my voice," spake the Almighty, "and if ye will keep my covenant, then shall ye be unto me peculiar above all peoples;"[7] and when Moses rehearsed these words unto the Hebrews they replied, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will perform."[8] But the realization of God's gracious promises to the world was not to depend upon the capricious conduct of any body of mortals. Once had the Lord spoken; and whether the people, whom He had chosen to be the instruments of His providence, should be willing agents or not, certain it was that His holy word would not be uttered in vain. "Like as the rain descendeth," saith the Lord, "and the snow from the heavens, and thither it does not return; but it moisteneth the earth, and maketh it generate, and put forth its increase, and furnish seed for the sower, and bread for the consumer: so is it with the word that goeth forth from my mouth: it shall not return unto me empty, but it shall accomplish what I have willed, and shall effect the purpose for which I have decreed it."[9] The history of the Jewish people offers, perhaps, one of the clearest illustrations of the fulfilment of this prophecy that can be presented to our notice. To afford the Abrahamic race the opportunity of accomplishing the gracious promise which was made to their illustrious ancestor Abraham—"And all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through thy posterity,"[10] the Lord condescended "to take unto Himself a nation from the midst of a nation;"[11] and יסבבנהו יבוננהו יצרנהו כאישון עינו "to hedge them round, to instruct

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[7] Exod. xix. 5. [8] Ibid. ver. 8. [9] Isaiah lv. 10, 11.
[10] Genesis xxii. 18. [11] Deut. iv. 34.

them, and to preserve them as the apple of His eye."[12] For this purpose also the Lord revealed unto His people a perfect code of moral laws, ordained public worship, and subsequently caused to be built at Jerusalem the glorious temple, which by means of the services that would there be performed, combined with the pure doctrines taught, might produce the happiest effects upon the heathen nations; or as Solomon said, after concluding his dedicatory prayer, למען דעת כל עמי הארץ כי יי הוא האלהים אין עוד "So that all the peoples of the earth might know that the Lord is God, and that there is none besides Him."[13]

In all this, the Israelites were required to be agents, as the whole nation had solemnly promised to be, on the memorable day when they were assembled at Sinai. But if the Israelites should be regardless of their duty, and should not bring a willing heart to the performance of their sacred task, still the Divine word would not become void; for the very perverseness and waywardness of Israel would be made subservient to God's gracious designs, or as the sentiment is forcibly expressed by the Psalmist,[14] חמת אדם תודך "The Lord would make the angry passions of man to offer Him praise."

Nothing therefore could prevail against God's declared purposes. These would infallibly be accomplished whether Israel should become nationally great or politically prostrate, whether the Temple should be preserved in its pristine glory on mount Zion, or whether it should be razed to the ground, and its

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[12] Deut. xxxii. 10. [13] 1 Kings, viii. 60.
[14] Psalm lxxvi. 11.

worshippers should be scattered abroad to the extremities of the earth. In any case, the Word of the Lord having once gone forth, the Jewish people would continue to be the instruments of Divine Providence, and would ultimately work out the Almighty's designs of benevolence and grace. Solomon was assured, after he had consecrated his temple, that if he and his descendants should continue faithful to the Mosaic law, the Lord would preserve to them their kingdom for ever. "But if," saith God, "you and your children should turn away from following after me, and if you should not keep my commandments, and my statutes which I have placed before you, and if you should go and serve other divinities, and worship them, then will I cut off Israel from the face of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified to My name, I will cast away from My presence, and Israel shall become a proverb and a reproach amongst all peoples."[15]

However humiliating it may be to make the confession, still truth obliges us to declare, that during a long period of their history, the Hebrews were less the voluntary agents, than the constrained instruments of God, for performing the covenant which He had made with the Patriarchs. But in the midst of their sinfulness God obliged His people to fulfil their destiny. The fall of Jerusalem, and the slavery of her rulers and subjects had long been predicted by the Prophets, and were accomplished in the days of Jeremiah by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Yet this

[15] 1 Kings, ix. 6, 7.

national misfortune offered no bar to the good which Israel was to be the means of effecting. When the Jews were led away captives into Chaldea, they carried with them the sublime doctrines and the ethical principles of Sinai; and such were the results produced, under God's Providence, by the teachings of the Jews in a land stained by the grossest idolatry, that we soon find the Babylonian monarch and his people offering praise and adoration, and ascribing exclusive power and dominion to Israel's God : לְמַלֵּךְ שְׁמַיָּא דִּי כָל מַעְבָדוֹהִי קְשׁוֹט וְאָרְחָתֵה דִּין "To the King of Heaven all whose works are true, and whose ways are judgment."[16] *We* also, brethren, in later times, have been permitted to be the instruments of God's Providence; and let us hope that we have proved ourselves less reluctant agents than our ancestors during the closing years of the Jewish monarchy, in diffusing amongst mankind at large a knowledge of the important truths of the Scriptures. Although our non-Jewish brethren do not deduce from the holy books the same doctrines which we believe them to contain; still it is scarcely possible for us to contemplate what is passing around us, without being moved by the liveliest sentiments of gratitude towards our heavenly Father, for having made the wondrous preservation of our people, and the Scriptures which we have every where carried with us, contribute so much towards the accomplishment of our mission; "to open the eyes of the blind, to bring the captive out of confinement, and from the dungeon those that dwell in darkness." By the especial blessing of Providence, the people whom the

[16] Daniel iv. 34.

Lord appointed "A Kingdom of Priests," has been instrumental in bringing all nations upon which civilisation has dawned to acknowledge the Eternal Lord, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and to receive the code which He delivered to Moses, and the messages which He conveyed through His several Prophets, as divine. Moreover, "The kingdom of Priests" has succeeded in impressing the pious-minded amongst enlightened men of all sects and creeds with the important doctrines of revelation—that piety and truth are the only offerings which are pleasing to God—that no ceremonials can supersede the eternal laws of justice and mercy—that no outward worship can compensate for inward religion—and that the great essentials of faith consist in universal charity and love, and in the fulfilment, in the most generous sense, of the old Jewish precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

But, my hearers, it is not sufficient that we teach these sublime ethics, unless we illustrate them by our own lives, and by the example which we set to others. Practice tells upon mankind with far greater force than precept: and hence the injunction of Moses to his people ושמרתם ועשיתם "to observe and to practise" the principles which he had taught them, so that when the neighbouring states should see the truths of revelation made manifest in Jewish life, they might say of the Israelites, "Surely this great nation is a wise and intelligent people."[17] This exhortation of the dying legislator was heeded for a time; but after our ancestors had secure possession of the land of Canaan,

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[17] Deut. iv. 6.

and were permitted to become great and prosperous therein, they turned aside from the path of duty, and often showed less regard for the doctrines of Moses than the people to whom they had made these doctrines known. Hence the applicability of the censure of the Prophet, found in that portion of the Haphtarah, which is placed at the head of this lecture, "Who is blind but my servant, and who is deaf but the messenger whom I have sent? Who is so blind as he that ought to be perfect, who so blind as the servant of the Lord?"

These words of rebuke come home to us also, brethren, with increased force, when we consider that we are living in an age, when an earnest zeal for religion prevails throughout the land, whilst we Jews, the descendants of the very people from whom the rest of mankind have learned all that they know of God and eternity, are not unfrequently deficient in animated devotion, and do not display as much attachment as we ought to the doctrines and practices of our holy faith. It were indeed a scandal if we, who have led so many of other communities to the altar of religion, should be less earnest for God and for a pious life than our disciples. Observe, brethren, the earnestness displayed by the men and women of each religious denomination in this country, for every thing that is calculated to promote and maintain the doctrines which they profess. Amongst the majority of our non-Jewish brethren, every member of the household assembles at morning and evening to join in family devotion; nor does the father of the family sit down to his daily meal, without offering up thanks to the Supreme Being for the food with which He

furnishes the table. Again, religious instruction at home forms a principal branch of the education of the family, and most strictly do they observe their Sabbath, though it be not solemnized on the day which is universally admitted to be commanded by Scripture. And how do our non-Jewish brethren sanctify their Sabbath? Taking their lesson from the Jews of old, husband and wife, children and servants, flock to the house of prayer and of religious instruction: that they may be enabled to discharge this duty, they fix their residence near their house of worship, and if one should not be at hand, no man regrets the pecuniary sacrifice it might cost him to bring the temple of prayer near to his abode. The sacred building once raised, it never lacks congregants, for men and women proceed there at all seasons. In fine, many of our neighbours make religion what it ought to be—the chief consideration of life.

But most melancholy, dear brethren, is the contrast which Jewish life not seldom offers to the picture that has just been drawn! There are amongst us too many families who do not assemble around the common hearth to thank God in concert when they lie down and when they rise up; too many Jewish parents are to be found who join with their children in partaking of the bounty of Heaven, without expressing one word of acknowledgment to the Great Giver of all. Again, religious instruction *at home*, the only place where it can be successfully conveyed, forms in such households little or no part of the daily discipline of the Jewish child; and in some dwellings, alas! no distinction is made

between the sabbath of the Lord, and the ordinary days of the week on which the Bible permits us to labor. Nor is sufficient anxiety manifested to be near the synagogue for the purpose of sabbath worship; whilst for absence from public devotion we are often ready to assign reasons, which we well know would not keep us from the pursuit of business or of worldly pleasure. In a word, brethren, too large a proportion of Israelites do not make religion the chief object of life.

Now when we seriously reflect, that by means of the Bible which Israel has preserved and made a universal property, we have induced every serious-minded man to set God and eternity high above every other consideration; that for this purpose "God called us in righteousness," and that notwithstanding our perverseness, He has permitted us to have "good success" in our vocation; and when we at the same time think, how many of us are deficient in veneration for God and His sacred word, and in devotedness to religion, we can hardly resist the conclusion, how much shame and mortification soever it may occasion us, that we have fully incurred the reproach of the Prophet, conveyed in the words of the text, "Who is blind but my servant, and who is deaf like the messenger whom I have sent; who is so blind as he that should be perfect, who so blind as the servant of the Lord? You see much, but you heed not; you incline your ears, but you do not attend."

In endeavouring to give a practical character to the lesson embodied in the present Haphtarah, I might be supposed by many of our brethren of the house of Israel, if my voice could reach them, to have

infused into the pulpit lecture a spirit that savours somewhat of austerity, or at least of excessive seriousness. Nor ought this to excite our surprise. Men who for a succession of years have evinced indifference for things spiritual—who from infancy have acquired the notion of confounding ceremonials with inward piety, and mistaking one for the other; and who have fallen into the serious error of believing that in order to become a good Israelite, one has merely to attend at the Synagogue on one or two occasions during the year, and to practise at home, at stated times, a few ritual ordinances;—men who thus construe their duties as Jews, may well receive as a startling innovation, a doctrine that is opposed to all their preconceived notions—a doctrine setting forth that religion is spirit and not letter—that it consists more in what we feel and do, than in what we profess; and that no one is worthy of the name of an Israelite in its true sense, who does not place the law of Moses, and the duties it enjoins, high above all other considerations, and who does not make God and eternity his chief thoughts by day and by night.

But, dear brethren, whatever others may think, I pray God that I may have been permitted to impress you, with the belief that I have preached to you the genuine doctrine of Scripture. On your part, my friends, do you also pray for me, so that I may ever be kept steady to the duty imposed upon a Jewish minister, and so that I may be enabled to echo the words of the Prophet Habakkuk,[1] על משמרתי אעמדה "I will stand upon my watch." Whenever a fitting opportunity presents itself, I shall deem it right, my

[1] Habakkuk ii. 1.

hearers, to direct your attention to the mode of life that ought to distinguish the people whom the Lord calleth "A kingdom of Priests," and "His Witnesses." And brethren, I scarcely know of anything better calculated to urge us on to the accomplishment of our glorious mission, than an attentive study of the prophetical writings, which will be brought under notice during the course of lectures on the Haphtaroth.

# XI.

## ON SELF-GOVERNMENT.

"TO ATTAIN TO SELF-GOVERNMENT IN GREAT THINGS, WE MUST BEGIN BY CONQUERING OURSELVES IN SMALL THINGS."

*Preached on Sabbath, April* 27, 5610 (1850).

JEREMIAH xii. 5.

כי את רגלים רצתה וילאוך ואיך תתחרה את הסוסים ובארץ שלום אתה בוטח ואיך תעשה בגאון הירדן

"If thou hast run against the footmen, and thou art become faint, how wilt thou be able to contend against the horses? And if, in a land of peace, where thou art secure, *thou despondest*, what wilt thou do in the overflowing of the Jordan?"

THE prophecies contained in the book of Jeremiah are not arranged in chronological order; and even those which bear precise dates are sometimes found out of the respective places which they should occupy. With regard, therefore, to the time when the predictions, which are without date, were delivered, we can only form conjectures.[1] If we might indulge the

[1] "With respect to the arrangement of the chapters in this prophetical book, no regularity is observed. We frequently find the chronological order inverted. Jeremiah prophesied under five kings, viz., Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jeconiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah. In some chapters the time of the prophecy is stated, *i. e.*, under which

hypothesis, that immediately after Jeremiah's ill success with his brethren of Anathoth, and the cruel treatment he has received from them, he presents himself before God to plead with Him (as is shewn at the opening of the chapter of our text), we should at once be enabled to understand the state of mind under which the Prophet is labouring, and we should perceive the full force of the words of heavenly rebuke, which are embodied in the passage of our text.[2]

Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office whilst yet in the spring of adolescence, and before he had com-

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king, and in what reign, it was pronounced. This is the case with the prophecies that belong to the days of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, in which we meet with a mention of the year of the respective reigns, or a general statement of "the beginning" of such a reign; or else the tenor of the prophecy sufficiently proves its reference to events in the days of Jehoiakim or Zedekiah. But the prophecies delivered during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, and Jeconiah, are not dated; and these, therefore, we are not enabled to place with certainty under either of the three kings' reigns. In fine, even those chapters which have dates are not arranged chronologically; for instance, prophecies delivered under Zedekiah are placed before those which belong to the times of Jehoiakim; and even those which come under the same reign are not arranged in their strict chronological order." (See preface to the work, quoted in Note 3, in the next page).

[2] The hypothesis upon which I have ventured derives no inconsiderable support from the following commentary of Rashi, on the passage מדוע דרך רשעים צלחה "Why does the way of the wicked prosper"? (Jeremiah xii. 1). שנתת גדולה לנבוכדנצר הרשע ותצליחהו להחריב ביתך · דבר אחר, על אנשי ענתות היה צועק וקורא תגר : "Because Thou hast given greatness to that tyrant Nebuchadnezzar, and wilt prosper him, so that he may effect the destruction of Thy house. Or it may be, *the men of Anathoth against whom he* (*the prophet*) *raises his plaintive cry.*" (See Rashi's Commentary on Jeremiah xii.)

pleted his thirteenth year;[3] hence the reply which he makes to the divine summons, אדני אלהים הנה לא ידעתי דבר כי נער אנכי "O Lord God, I know not how to speak, for I am but a youth."[4]

Anathoth, his native town, appears to have been the first place where Jeremiah pronounced the divine oracles. His fellow-townsmen, long addicted to the licentious practices of idolatry, refuse to listen to his prophetical remonstrances: they make, in all probability, his extreme youth the butt of their mockery and insult, and subject him to harsh treatment and persecution. How bitterly Jeremiah felt this cruel conduct of his brethren may be perceived from the concluding part of the eighteenth chapter of his book, where we find him calling down the most awful imprecations on his persecutors. Here, alas! we behold but too true a picture of frail humanity, unable to control passion, and to subdue revenge, so long as the heart smarts under a keen sense of wrongs which have been recently inflicted. There are commentators who seek to palliate the imprecations in which Jeremiah indulges, on the

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[3] This is the unanimous opinion of the Jewish commentators. A corresponding statement may be found in the preface to R. David Ottensosser's and R. Shalom Cohen's translation of, and Biour on, the Book of Jeremiah (Fürth A. M. 5570), in the following words. ירמיה הנביא נולד בענתות עיר חכהנים סמוך לירושלים בארץ בנימין בתחלת מלכות יאשיהו מלך יהודה "Jeremiah the Prophet was born at Anathoth, a city of the priests, near Jerusalem, in the land of Benjamin, at the commencement of the reign of Josiah, king of Judah." Now, if he was born in the *beginning* of Josiah's reign, and began to prophesy in that king's thirteenth year (see Jeremiah i. 2), the Prophet could not have completed his thirteenth year when he received his first mission.

[4] Jeremiah i. 6.

grounds that they were forced from him by his intense sufferings;[5] but no excuse can here avail, nor can the existence of any circumstances free the Prophet, in this single instance, from the accusation of having lost his self-control, and violated the important Mosaic precept, "Thou shalt not avenge injuries, and thou shalt not bear a grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."[6] Jeremiah's conduct here offers a melancholy contrast to the whole of the subsequent history of the Prophet, who in all his other trials and persecutions, appears to have had a complete mastery over his passions, and to have succeeded better than the best of men usually succeed in the practice of self-denial. If indulgence can at all be asked, it must only be on the score of the youthful age of Jeremiah, when he was sent to prophesy at Anathoth.

Driven forth ignominiously from the place where he was born, and where his earliest friendships had been formed, he presents himself (according to the hypothesis upon which we have ventured) before God, as

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[5] See Dr. Dahler on Jeremiah, *in loco*.

[6] Lev. xix. 18. There is scarcely any moral practice for recommending and enforcing which, more illustrations can be produced from the Talmud and the Midrashim than the duty of forgiving injuries. Every style of composition, from the pithy adage to the dramatic parable, is enlisted in the service of *mercy*. The examples occur in sufficient number to impede selection, and may be met with in many compilations of Talmudical apophthegms, among which the Anthology of L. Dukes deserves especial distinction. The whole principle is set forth in the fulness of its beauty in this saying of the Talmud: אשרו חמוץ ואל תאשרו חומץ "Call him blessed that *is oppressed*; but not him that is *the oppressor*" (Ioma xxxix. 2). Maimonides, after pointing out the sinfulness of refusing to do an

recorded in the opening of the twelfth chapter, under the most excited feelings. צדיק אתה יי כי אריב אליך וכו׳ "Thou art too just, O Lord," saith he, "that I should plead with Thee, yet I would speak to Thee concerning Thy dispensations;" or according to the Chaldee paraphrase, "I would ask of Thee a question."[7] Jeremiah then enquires how it happens that God permits the wicked (alluding to the men of Anathoth) to continue in being, and especially why He suffers them to increase in worldly wealth? The last four verses of the chapter furnish an answer, by setting forth the wretched end of the evil-doers. But before this reply is given, God is pleased to visit the Prophet with a gentle, parental reproof, for his want of forbearance and self-control, in the words of the text: "If thou hast run with footmen only and art fatigued, how wilt thou endure when thou hast to run with horses?" Here footmen are compared to ordinary evils, and horses to trials of a more fearful character, to which the Prophet would be subjected in the progress of his career. The important question, therefore,

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act of kindness to the man who on a previous occasion has refused to accord to us the same service, proceeds as follows: "What is to be understood by bearing a grudge? A says to B, Sell me this house; or, Lend me this ox;" and B refuses: on a subsequent occasion, B requires to purchase or to borrow something of A. Now A must not say, "I am ready to grant thy request; for I am not like thee, and will not reward thee according to thy deserts." Whosoever should thus act would transgress the precept לא תטור (thou shalt not bear a grudge). It is his duty to blot out such a remembrance from his mind, since so long as he bears it in his thoughts, he may be induced to resent the unkind act practised by B. (Maimonides, הלכות דיעות ז׳ ח׳).

[7] שאילת אנא שאל מן קדמך

addressed to Jeremiah is this: if thou, who art chosen for the most sacred office to which man can be called, to an office which especially demands the practice of kindness and love, of gentleness and forbearance—if thou canst not endure the contradiction and even the persecution which every man, more or less, must encounter, who fearlessly tells the rich and powerful, that wrong-doing is as culpable in them, as in the poor and the lowly—how wilt thou be able to master thy passions and to mortify thy self-consequence, when thou wilt be required to prove thy mission by the sacrifices which thou wilt have to make to maintain the Truth of Him that sent thee?

Now I propose to adopt the same principle as that contained in my text, and to present it to you, my hearers, in this form. If you should fail to train yourselves in the wholesome discipline of reining in your unlawful desires, and of suppressing your irritability, your obstinacy and your pride, whilst those passions are so partially developed as to render the task comparatively easy—seeing that the good work demands only a little self-control and self-denial—how can you hope to succeed in this essential object of genuine religion, at a later period of life, when each evil inclination will have acquired, from long and almost unchecked indulgence, an irresistible force, and will have worked its way deeply into your moral constitution? Such is the question which I would deduce from the text, in order that I may especially address its moral to the youthful portion of my congregants.

It requires no elaboration of proof to impress upon your minds, a truth which must be evident

to every one capable of reflection, that youth is the fittest season for seriously undertaking the work of patience, forbearance, and self-control; since the crosses and vexations, and the trials and temptations to which this phase of existence is subject, cannot be compared in point of magnitude, or of the keen sense that they excite in the heart, to those which beset us at a more advanced period, when we are called out into business or active life. Again, the disposition of a youth is especially adapted to this species of moral work, which requires above all things submissiveness; because, being aware of the limited range of his knowledge and experience, and how totally dependent he is upon his parents and teachers, for guidance in the path that leads to honour, virtue, and happiness, the very first lesson which he learns is, what Almighty God intended it to be—obedience.

It does not follow, however, that this lesson is always faithfully practised; and perhaps there might be some young persons now present who, if the question were put to them, whether their parents or themselves are the safer authorities as to what might conduce to their ultimate benefit, would unhesitatingly reply, *the former:* and still at times, when a father's or mother's advice should be found in opposition to their own inclinations, they might manifest much annoyance and ill-humour, much obstinacy and contradiction, before they could bring themselves to acknowledge by their actions, that a parent possesses more wisdom and has more experience than his child. Now if the case which I merely suppose should indeed exist; and if amongst my hearers there should be any children who, though they do not positively disobey

their parents, still find it difficult to subdue their obstinate spirits, and to conform themselves to parental guidance, I would invite them to give their earnest consideration to the words of the text, pronounced by God himself. If you cannot keep up with footmen, how shall you be able to run against horses? If you, at a season of life, when obedience is your distinguishing virtue, cannot so check your impetuous disposition, master your perverse spirit, and submit to the superior judgment of those who love you better, because more wisely, than you love yourselves; what reasonable hope can you have, that when you become men and women, and when the passions which you now nurse in your hearts will have acquired such force as to steal away your reason and to rule you with an iron sceptre,[8] you will be able to encounter real vexations and trials, and to practise forbearance and self-denial, without which you would not only be discontented and unhappy, but you would be regarded by your fellow-creatures as offensively proud, overbearing and tyrannical; and worst of all, you would be totally unfitted to live the life of pious Israelites?

If the experience of children is too limited to have brought them into personal contact with the world, they must at least have heard or read of men of haughtiness and pride, and that by indulging in these passions, they have rendered themselves the objects of universal contempt. They will suffer no one to entertain an opinion at variance with their own; they will not tolerate the influence of any one in the company with which they mix, and over which they arrogate

[8] כיון שעבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה הותרה "A sin repeated appears to the sinner no longer odious" (Moed Katon xxvii. 2).

to themselves the right of ruling. Possessed of money, they can afford to pay for the performance of most of the services of a menial or an official character, which one being requires from another; but they do not regard those who discharge the duties of their office as fellow-creatures, equal to themselves; but rather as machines, created solely to contribute to their ease and convenience. You know that such beings have lived and do still exist amongst us, and you also know how their insolent and presumptuous conduct has estranged them from human love, and has made them a bye-word and a reproach.

Now as the really pious Israelite commiserates the sinner, how much soever he may hate the sin,[9] the hope that naturally arises in every generous heart is, that these proud and overbearing persons might be reclaimed from their sinful course, and might be made to feel that the true distinction between man and man exists not between the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, but between the morally good and bad. Yet can these men change their ways, and in advanced age begin life anew? If the thing be not impossible, the difficulty of bringing it about amounts, as we are told by the Prophet from whose book I am preaching, almost to an impossibility. "Can the Ethiopian," says he, "change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, who habituate yourselves to do evil."[10] No, my hearers, if at a late period of life the proud man would become humble; the selfish, kind and considerate: and the tyrannical and over-

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[9] See Talmud, Berachoth. x. 1. [10] Jeremiah xiii. 23.

bearing, tolerant and gentle; he would have—to employ the phraseology of the text—"to run and keep up with horses:" but how shall he hope to succeed, when at an earlier stage of his career, "he could not run against the footmen?" Now let me give a more prosaic version of the last phrase. The race between him and his passions, might have been run in his boyhood, when he lived in his father's house, and when he might have easily tamed his haughtiness and pride by being civil, affable, gentle and kind to the servants of the house, and by being thankful for every act of service rendered to him;[11] always bearing in mind, that whilst there is an obligation on the part of the employed for the hire he receives, there is a correspondent obligation on the part of the employer for the work performed. But he suffered the season to pass by when self-rule might have been exerted with certain effect—the season when he could have "run against the footmen" and have kept up with them. The fitting opportunity, however, once neglected, every additional day's license which he gave to his passions, communicated to them an increased force, and they are now become so much a part of his nature, that it is difficult, if not impossible, for him to eradicate them from his moral system. He refused "to run against the footmen," and now "he cannot keep up with the horses."

The same argument may be applied to every vice that deforms the heart. Let the passion for lying grow on from childhood to manhood, and neither private nor public reproof, no, nor the shame to

[11] כל אדם שיש בו גסות הרוח כאלו עובד עבודה זרה "A man inflated with pride is equal to an idolator" (Sota v. 1).

which he is exposed, will wean the liar from his wicked propensity. Falsehood will be his prevailing habit, and even when his interested purposes would be better served by truth, from the very force of vicious practice, he will adopt the former. How easily might he have conquered this propensity in his youth, when lying was with him more a caprice than an evil design; but "he could not run against the footmen; how can he keep up now with horses?" Again, who can successfully plead with the confirmed gamester, so as to wean him from his absorbing passion? Though he admit its gross immorality, and its pernicious consequences, he will tell you that gambling has become his great excitement, without which he cannot live. And so he continues in his sinful course, entailing misery on himself and his wife and family, whom he is bound to protect, as far as lies in his power, against privation and want; and not unfrequently staking and sacrificing in gambling, betting, or reckless speculation, the property of others, perhaps of the widow and the orphan, confided to his keeping in sacred trust.

Look also at the spendthrift who has run through an ample estate, and brought ruin and wretchedness to his home! Do you inquire what induced him to be so extravagant and profuse? Seek the cause in the season of his youth, when he was wont to lay out all that his indulgent parents gave him, for the gratification of the moment, and to put away all thought of the useful things which he might require on the morrow. Though oft reproved, he heeded little; "there will be time enough." said he, "to correct this propensity when I am older." He argued like a

simpleton: it would have cost him but little to curb his passion for waste in those days; but he let the time go by when he might have "run against the footmen," and now he cannot "keep up in the race with horses." In fine, we might employ our text in reference to avarice, to stealing, to fraud, to intemperance, to gluttony, and to the whole catalogue of bad practices; and we should find that each of these degrading habits had a very small beginning in youth, when it might have been successfully checked and conquered: but as the man failed to master the vice in time, the vice in its turn became the master.

From what has been advanced to-day, I trust that every youthful hearer will learn the wholesome lesson of exerting self-denial in his earliest years,[12] so that he miss not the opportunity, as the text says, of "running against the footmen." And let me tell you, my young friends, that the best place where you can carry this lesson into practice, is your own home. Children generally consider themselves under some restraint when they are abroad or in company, and so they manage to rein in for the time the unamiable passions, in which they have no shame of indulging at home, when surrounded by their brothers and sisters, and the different servants, whom they fancy to be in some measure dependent upon them. Now I earnestly pray you, children, to be cautioned in time against such an error. Home is the place, well nigh the only place, for moral and religious training; and if it were possible for us to examine into the mode of life of

[12] The Rabbins say figuratively מי שטרח בערב שבת יאכל בשבת "Only he that exerts himself before the Sabbath, shall enjoy the Sabbath" (Aboda Zora iii. 1).

all the great and good men, who have left to posterity a name honoured and revered for their practical piety and genuine benevolence and goodness of heart, I venture to assert with confidence, that we should find that the spot where they learned and practised these holy lessons, was not so much the school, the college, or even the house of public worship, as their father's and mother's dwelling. Train then yourselves *at home*, "to run against the footmen": be patient and mild with your brothers and sisters; be submissive to your teachers; be affectionate and obedient to your parents; be civil and gentle to the servants who assist you; and regard all those with whom you come in contact with sentiments of love. And, dear children, if you find your tempers at any time at variance with those duties, reason with yourselves, and do not rest content until you shall have gained a decisive victory over your wayward dispositions. The power will then be in your own hands. "Run against the footmen," as saith our text. Delay not, for the passion that is now in its infancy will, if unchecked, grow by and by to a monster: and Scripture doth this day testify unto you, that if you do not master yourselves in small things, you assuredly will not in things of greater magnitude.

# XII.

## ON OUTWARD AND INWARD WORSHIP.

*Preached on Sabbath* פרשת קדושים *May* 10, 1845 (5605).

JEREMIAH vii. 21—23.

כה אמר יי צבאות אלהי ישראל עלתיכם ספו על זבחיכם
ואכלו בשר: כי לא דברתי את אבותיכם ולא צויתים
ביום הוציא אותם מארץ מצרים על דברי עלה וזבח: כי
אם את הדבר הזה צויתי אתם לאמר שמעו בקלי והייתי
לכם לאלהים ואתם תהיו לי לעם והלכתם בכל הדרך אשר
אצוה אתכם למען ייטב לכם:

"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Add your burnt-offerings to your sacrifices, and eat them for meat. For I spake not to your fathers, nor did I charge them on the day when I brought them forth from the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offering or sacrifice. But this thing commanded I them, saying; Be obedient to my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people, and walk in all the way which I charge you, in order that it may be well with you."

THE Holy Scriptures enjoin a two-fold kind of worship, inward or spiritual, and outward or ceremonial, constituting the relative characters of the two phases of positive religion — the essence and the accident; the matter and the manner; the spirit and the form. We are strictly cautioned however in the passage of our text, not to confound outward

rites with inward religion, nor to act on the false notion, that mere ceremonial practices can ever recommend us to the favour and the approval of our Heavenly Father, who, saith Jeremiah, did not charge our ancestors concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices, but commanded them to obey His will. The Prophet preaches here no new doctrine, but simply echoes the teachings of Moses and of the Lord's other inspired messengers, as I shall endeavour to show in the course of this sermon.

But though the outward rite be widely different from the inward sentiment, still it by no means follows that the ceremonials of religion are unimportant, or that they can safely be dispensed with. On the contrary, Israelites have ever held in the highest estimation ritual observances, because they are instrumental in making us more and more intimate with the spirit which they enshrine, and because, subjecting us to habits of early and regular discipline, they are well calculated to act as a means to an end, and to train us to lead a holy life. These reasons are sufficient—to say nothing of the divine appointment of a ritual—to clothe with the robe of sanctity every religious observance which is not repugnant to reason, and which does not countenance superstition. Men have at times imagined themselves to be independent of ritual forms or helps to piety; but universal experience has impressed the Jewish mind with the conviction that where ceremonials are totally disregarded, a veneration for the doctrines of revealed religion does not long survive.

It were greatly to be desired that our thoughts should be at all times directed to the sublime ethics

of Judaism, so that we stood not in any need of outward monitors to remind us of our duties and to urge us to perform them. It were well, indeed, if we could bear constantly in mind the essence of many a scriptural lesson, that religion is spirit and not letter, that the love of God and of our fellow-creatures is the firmest prop of righteousness, and that the holiest and most acceptable worship consists in a life devoted to virtue, benevolence and usefulness.[1] But so capricious is our nature, and so prone are we, amidst the busy scenes of life, to have our attention called off from heavenly things and from much that concerns our happiness here and our salvation hereafter, that our Almighty parent has been pleased to command unto us, what the celebrated Maimonides properly denominates מצות זכרוניות "laws of remembrance." At our going out and our coming in, and at our rising up and lying down, we are charged to perform certain rites, which may become instrumental in bringing the Holy One of Israel to our hearts and to our minds. We are all creatures of custom, and are therefore only enabled to acquire the habits of a devotional spirit, by the constant use and repetition of religious observances. Through the agency of outward forms we become more identified with the spirit of piety; and because the primary object of

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[1] "Whatever gives pain or annoyance to thyself, abstain from doing to thy neighbour," said R. Hillel to the Gentile convert; "this is the whole law: everything else is but commentary." (Sabbath 31.)

King David reduced the whole law to eleven principles; Isaiah to six; Micah to three; Habakkuk to one; viz.: צדיק באמונתו יחיה. "The just man shall live in his faith" (Maccoth 24.)

ritual ordinances is to purify our hearts and to advance us in faith, we call these ceremonials *themselves* Religion, regarding them as the ties by which we are closely linked to God.

Moses, our legislator, treats outward observances as a part of Judaism, but in a secondary sense only, as a means to an end. He bids us "make fringes upon the borders of our garments,"[2] not because that act of itself is capable of conferring any spiritual benefit upon the Hebrews who practise it; "but," says he, וראיתם אתו וזכרתם את כל מצות י׳ ועשיתם אותם "that when they look upon this fringe, they may remember all the commandments of the Lord, and be induced to perform them."[3] In the book of Deuteronomy he refers to the ordinances which he has been charged to deliver to the Israelites, concerning inward as well as outward worship, and speaks thus: "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments, as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may perform them in the midst of the land, which ye go to possess. Observe them and execute them, for this will constitute your wisdom and your intelligence in the estimation of the peoples, who, when they shall hear of all these statutes, will exclaim, Surely this great nation is a wise and intelligent people."[4] It is very clear from these words, that Judaism is intended to be a practical religion, and that its aim is moral excellence. To this end all ceremonials were to conduce; and we may rest assured, my hearers, that our outward ordinances will never fail to be held in due estimation, pro-

[2] Numb. xv. 38. [3] Ibid v. 39. [4] Deut. iv. 5, 6.

vided that we take good heed to ourselves of the holy spirit of our law, and do not suffer mere ritual machinery, by means of which we strive to make manifest our duty to God, to supersede that all-important duty itself.

In the days of the "Judges," and, more especially, after the theocratical form of government was displaced by monarchical institutions, the Hebrews, for the most part, deviated from the pure principles of Monotheism, so rigidly enforced in the Pentateuch, and, as a natural consequence, their attachment to the distinguishing ethical precepts taught by Moses was materially weakened. Like the idolatrous nations by which they were surrounded, the sons of Jacob were influenced more by the form than the spirit of religion; and as they considered it a far easier task—because it imposed no moral restraint or self-denial—to practise outward ceremonials than to walk in the path of righteousness, they perverted the object for which, as the inspired Moses tells us, ritual ordinances had been introduced: and, regarding them as the sole end of piety, they vainly imagined that they could make up for their deficiency in godliness, by an over-scrupulous performance of the duties of outward worship. This appears unhappily to have been the prevailing sin in the times of Isaiah, who severely reproves the "scornful men" for inculcating the erroneous notion that the Word of the Lord consists in צו לצו צו לצו קו לקו קו לקו זער שם זער שם "ordinance upon ordinance, ordinance upon ordinance; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little."[5]

[5] Isaiah xxviii. 13.

The nothingness of ritual practices, when compared with a holy life, is also the especial burden of the oracle which he pronounces in the first chapter of his book.[6] "Of what avail to me is the multitude of your sacrifices, saith the Lord? I am cloyed with the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I have no delight in the blood of bullocks, of rams, or of goats. When you present yourselves before Me, who requires this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring me no more an empty oblation; as for incense, it is my abomination. The new moon, and the Sabbath, and the assembly proclaimed, I cannot support: what! impiety blended with a solemn rite!"[7] Such is the language in which the exponent of pure Judaism speaks of religious forms apart from inward piety. But the Prophet tells us at the same time, what kind of worship is, and ever will be, acceptable to the Holy God. "Wash ye, make you clean: put away your evil doings from before mine eyes: Cease to act wickedly. Learn to do well: seek judgment: amend that which is corrupt: do justice to the fatherless: defend the cause of the widow."[8] In a like spirit we must receive the passage of our text: "I spake not to your fathers, nor did I charge them on the day when I brought them out of Egypt concerning burnt-offering and sacrifice. But this thing did I command them, saying, Be obedient to My voice."

When we refer to various passages in the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah, it will become evident to us, that it is not the purpose of these Prophets of

[6] The elegant translation of Dr. Lowth is here occasionally adopted.

[7] Isaiah i. 11—13. [8] Ibid. ver. 16, 17.

Judah to denounce ceremonial observances in the abstract, nor to detract aught from their avowed importance, so long as they are performed in a spirit of humility, and are estimated at their proper worth, as mere auxiliaries to a practically pious life. The object of these inspired penmen is to impress us seriously with the conviction, that outward ceremonials or mechanical worship, fill but a subordinate place in the Jewish system, whilst obedience to the Divine will, and a strict observance of the principles of the moral law, occupy the foremost ground, and in fact constitute the very essence of Judaism.

Let it not be supposed, my hearers, as indeed some have imagined, that the doctrines set forth by Isaiah and Jeremiah, are considerably in advance of the early teachings of Moses, and that they are to be received as evidences that Judaism attained to a higher degree of moral perfection in the age of the Prophets just quoted, than it possessed in the days of the Hebrew legislator. Such is not the case. The contemporaries of Isaiah and of Jeremiah were unquestionably more polished and literate than the masses which left Egypt, and were, therefore, better qualified to understand doctrines not couched in the plainest and simplest language, than the men who traversed the great desert. But, allowing for this difference of diction, nothing new is advanced either in the book of Isaiah or in the passage of our text, nothing which is not coeval with the earliest promulgation of the Mosaic code.

The volume of the Pentateuch affords us many opportunities for verifying this statement. Sacrifices, considered as an essential part of outward worship,

make a prominent feature in the Mosaic system; but the inspired legislator treats them not as an end, but as a means only, through which man's gratitude to the Almighty might be publicly evinced for acts of mercy and kindness graciously bestowed upon him, and his sorrow visibly manifested whenever he might sin against the laws of his Creator. Moses admits the sufficiency of the אשם or "trespass offering," in cases where the Israelite sins against a levitical or canonical ordinance; but he declares the אשם to be valueless of itself, in any instance where the golden rule of morality, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,"[9] has been infringed. "If a man sin and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbour concerning anything which was delivered to him to keep, or in traffic, or in a thing taken away by violence, or if he act to the prejudice of his neighbour; or if he have found anything which was lost and denied it, and have sworn falsely, in any of these that a man doth sin therein: then hath he sinned, and he is guilty; and he shall restore that which he violently took away, or the thing which he hath treacherously obtained, or that which was deposited with him in traffic, or the lost thing which he hath found, or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall restore it in the principal, and shall add to it a fifth part more, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth."[10] When the sinner had made this moral amends, he was permitted to bring his אשם; but not before. "What regulation," observes Dr. Graves, "could point out more clearly the inefficacy

[9] Leviticus xix. 18. [10] Leviticus v. 21—24.

of sacrifice, where guilt was not unfeignedly repented of, and all the advantages, which had tempted to its perpetration, renounced and resigned, and where full restitution to the injured individual did not accompany humiliation before God?"[1] It is also worthy of note, that Moses merely attaches a local character to sacrificial rites, and solemnly interdicts the offering of sacrifices in any place, save that spot in Judæa which the Lord might especially choose.[2]

Again, whilst the Jewish lawgiver enforces circumcision as the distinguishing rite of the Abrahamic race—a rite which is commanded to be observed by every Israelite *for ever* throughout his generation, under the awful penalty of כרת (excision):[3] he nevertheless teaches us that the circumcision of the flesh will profit us little before God, unless we also circumcise our hearts. ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם "circumcise the foreskin of your hearts."[4] Nay more, Moses suffered the rite of circumcision, probably from sanitary causes, to be in abeyance during the whole of the forty years that the Israelites are traversing the desert.[5] Likewise the ceremony of the Passover, one of the most important observances of the Jewish ritual, which is commanded as a perpetual ordinance,[6] to be held at a *fixed time* of the year,[7] and the violation of which is also threatened with the punishment of כרת (excision), is permitted to be postponed, as far as it relates to individuals under especial circumstances, for a full month.[8]

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[1] Graves on the Pentateuch, part ii. lecture ii.

[2] Deut. xii. 13, 14. [3] Genesis xvii. 14. [4] Deut. x. 16.

[5] Joshua v. 3—7. [6] Exod. xiii. 10. [7] ibid. xii. 18.

[8] Numb. ix. 8—14.

It should then seem, my hearers, from the writings of Moses himself, that the most important ritual observances, which no God-fearing Israelite can fail to keep as "perpetual ordinances," are not regarded by the Scriptures as of equal consequence with the moral law, or inward religion. We have just seen that individuals were suffered to postpone the observance of the Passover for a month, and that the rite of the ברית was inoperative for nearly half a century; but we no where find that the principles of justice, truth, and mercy have ever been subject to change, or that the three grand articles of Judaism—the Unity of the Godhead, Divine revelation, and the immortality of the soul and man's accountability hereafter—have ever been permitted to be inoperative for a single hour. We may reasonably conclude therefore, that Judaism, as it is set forth by Moses, draws a wide line of distinction between the form and the substance, between ceremonial religion and spiritual religion. We learn also from the same high authority, that whilst the great moral principles of the Bible are fixed and certain, and never will be changed; ceremonials, though scripturally ordained, are changeable at the will of God, or by the fact of our being placed in circumstances which render it impossible for us to perform those rites.

The biblical writings, which mark the period that intervened from the time of Moses to the inspired men who prophesied under the kings of Judah, attach the same character to external forms when compared with inward religion, as that which is assigned to them by our immortal legislator. I will adduce one or two instances. The first is found in the first book of

Samuel.[9] King Saul disobeys the commands of God, and Samuel is sent to reprove the sinful monarch, and to announce that his house will soon cease to reign. On approaching the royal camp, the Prophet observes that great preparations are being made for offering sacrifices out of the spoil taken from the Amalekites; but he turns away with disgust from all this outward parade of piety, and says, החפץ לה׳ בעלות וזבחים כשמוע בקול יי׳ הנה שמע מזבח טוב להקשיב מחלב אילים "Has the Lord the same delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in the obedience paid to His voice? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is preferable to the offering of the fat of rams." Another instance occurs in the fifty-first Psalm. David, having grievously sinned, desires to make his peace with God and to obtain forgiveness. The sacrificial rite was then practised in Israel, and bullocks and rams were received for offerings at the altar by the officiating priest; but the guilty monarch knew too well the spirit of Judaism, to suffer himself to be deceived by the fallacious hope that burnt offerings and sacrifices could make atonement for his heavy transgressions. We hear him acknowledging the wide separation that exists between inward and outward worship, as we listen to his cries sent forth in the agony of remorse: כי לא תחפץ זבח ואתנה עולה לא תרצה : זבחי אלהים רוח נשברה לב נשבר ונדכה אלהים לא תבזה "Surely Thou hast no delight in sacrifice, or I would offer it: a burnt offering will not be acceptable. The sacrifice for God is a mortified spirit; a humble and contrite heart, O my God, Thou will not despise."[1]

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[9] xv. 21, 22. [1] Psalms li. 18, 19.

From the various passages which have been cited from the Scriptures, sufficient evidence has been adduced to confirm the doctrine of our text, and to impress us with the important consideration, that in the sight of God no two things are more distinct from each other (albeit they are both essential), than religious ceremony and religious principle. Now when we observe how careful the biblical writers are, not to confound the spirit of religion even with the forms sanctioned by Divine authority,—and which cannot, therefore, be changed, except under the especial circumstances to which I have already alluded,—it can hardly fail to strike us as a fact totally at variance with the history and the practices of Judaism, that ceremonials, *not* clothed with a Scriptural sanction, but introduced by uninspired men, should not only have been suffered to survive the times for which they were intended, but that they should be regarded as of equal importance with the principles of religion themselves, and no less sacred than the ordinances commanded by the very Word of God.

The ritual observances enjoined upon us by our pious Rabbins of the earlier centuries, are entitled to our highest respect, I might almost say to our veneration, when we consider that they were introduced by great and good men, the channels of tradition, and the faithful guardians of the holy Scriptures—men who patiently endured the severest persecutions that malignant bigotry could inflict, and who not unfrequently submitted themselves to the rack and the stake, rather than yield even a tacit assent to any doctrine which they conscientiously believed to be repugnant to the pure teachings of Moses. Many

centuries have closed over the doctors of the Mishna; and although subsequent ages may have produced men as wise and as pious, still no body of individuals has ever since arisen so truly devoted to Judaism, and so ready to sacrifice to its doctrines every worldly advantage. But whilst we freely make this admission, we must not put out of sight the significant fact, that these Rabbins were but uninspired mortals, and could not always be expected to frame laws in which there should be no admixture of error.

No one then, it is humbly submitted, can place the ordinances of the Talmud on a level with the commands of God, without casting something like discredit on the perfect wisdom of the latter; and we have the fullest grounds for concluding from the dicta of the Talmudists themselves, that these worthy men never claimed so high a distinction for their enactments. It was never contemplated by them, that the majority of the observances which they enjoined, in a perilous age, for the safety of Judaism, would be permitted to outlive the times for the exigences of which they had been introduced.[1] The early Talmudists were too well read in the history of the

[1] A plain proof of this may be found in the "Piske Harosh," or the short decisions of R. Asher, referring to the first Mishnaic Ordinance in the treatise "Aboda Zara." The prescriptions of the Mishna appear to have as *general* a character as possible: no exception is there made in favour of any future time, or any different state of things. Still, after having set forth in how far Rashi, Rabbenu Tham, R. Alphes, etc. etc., have modified, and in how far those Talmudical expounders have confirmed the prohibitions in that Mishna, R. Asher boldly adds, והאידנא הכל מותר "but now the entire prohibition is annulled."

Jewish ritual, not to have been aware that the Synagogue has at all times exercised her privilege of modifying external forms, derived from human authority, which are contrary to the feelings or at variance with the circumstances of the time being. There are three great Jewish ceremonials, which no human power can set aside, but which must always be observed in Israel, viz., the covenant of Abraham (ברית מילה), the sabbath and the festivals, and the distinction of meats. But nothing has been subject to so many variations as the external forms that relate to public devotion. It is well observed by Dr. Mannheimer, that the mode of worship that obtained in the times of David and Solomon, offered a striking contrast to that which was practised in the travelling Tabernacle during the age of Moses. "It differed again," says he, "in the time of the second Temple, when many ceremonials used in the former house were discontinued. Again did it vary in the days of the אנשי כנסת הגדלה (Synagoga Magna), when formularies were first introduced, numerous Synagogues sprang up, and, when in addition to the sacrifices, liturgies were read. That it again differed after the compilation of the Mishna, must be evident to every one who is acquainted with the Prayer Book in common use. Devotional forms have again varied in modern times, not because men have ceased to respect the opinions of the ancient teachers in Israel; but because the social position of Israel has called for a modification of formularies and observances which were peculiar to the early ages. We hazard not much in saying that these forms will vary again and again, and that mankind will be forced to harmonize them with their

social state."[1] The Bible itself appears to contemplate this necessity; for, although it earnestly enjoins public worship, it imposes no particular liturgy, save the fifteen words comprised in ברכת כהנים[2] and the few lines to be pronounced by the communicant at the altar, when he presents the offering of the first fruits of the ground.[3] In all other respects, concerning the precise mode in which public worship shall be carried into effect, or the particular liturgy that shall be used, the Pentateuch is silent, leaving the forms of worship to depend upon the social condition of the Israelites.

But notwithstanding that ceremonials, derived from human authority, and especially those that relate to public worship, may be subject to, and indeed from time to time demand modification; still these changes ought not to be made rashly,[4] nor without a reverential consideration that we are dealing with the outworks of religion. It would have afforded us the highest satisfaction and delight, if, before this congregation was established, we could have induced the heads of the Synagogues in this country to recognise the principle, that the Biblical precepts commanded by God are fixed, but that the ordinances of men as applied to the ritual worship are variable, and must, as historical Judaism is all-sufficient to teach, be made to harmonize with the requirements

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[1] Gottesdienstliche Vorträge über die Wochenabschnitte des Jahres.

[2] Numb. vi. 24, 25, 26. [3] Deut. xxvi. 5 et *seq.*

[4] אל ישנה אדם מפני המחלוקת "The fear of creating division ought to deter us from innovations," is a principle, the general soundness of which cannot be doubted.

of the age in which we live. But when instead of succeeding in the desired object, we were met by the unqualified declaration that the form was as sacred as the spirit, and that the one could no more be modified than the other could be extinguished, we could not, without incurring the guilt of the utmost indifference for the highest and truest happiness of ourselves and of our children, continue to look on with apathy, whilst the worship of the Synagogue was fast sinking into neglect. We felt that if we remained inactive any longer, we should be acquiescing in the near-approaching extinction of all devotional sentiment in the breasts of the rising generation of Israel. We had no alternative but to devote ourselves to the equally difficult and conscientious task of regenerating the Synagogue worship, wherever its form had been rendered unsightly by reason of the persecutions that prevailed during many hostile centuries.

Much as we could have wished that the work had been accomplished by those who were then in authority, and that as far as it was practicable every Synagogue had adopted one and the same ritual, time has convinced us of the wisdom of the course which we deemed it right to pursue: and it well behoves us to record our sense of the mercy and goodness of the Lord, who has permitted us to accomplish the good work which we undertook, not for our own aggrandizement, nor for the gratification of any private end, but for the glorification of our Heavenly Father.

But whilst we boldly assert our right to introduce such modifications into the worship of the Synagogue, as our altered circumstances may require (always taking care not to encroach upon the Biblical

ordinances, nor even rashly to deviate from the old traditions), we feel that this is a step which should not be taken without the most careful investigation. Having succeeded, therefore, under Divine Providence, in making the worship of our Synagogue conducive to true devotion, and, as we firmly believe, to spiritual religion, it now becomes us to manifest the greatest seriousness and constancy for the forms and practices which prevail in our Temple of prayer. Regarding our ceremonials as auxiliaries to religion, we must invest them with a certain fixedness of character. They must not be suffered to lose a particle of their seriousness by being varied from year to year; but our efforts must be directed to preserve them, so that they may command the respect and the veneration of every member of the congregation, and so that they may become the means of leading us to the glorious truths and the elevating principles, of which they are at once the emblems and the safeguards.

Coming back, then, from this digression to the more immediate object of the lesson taught in the passage of our text, we learn, *first*, that external forms are not to be passed by as of little or no importance; but that they are indispensably necessary, and are to be held in pious awe by every faithful Israelite, as a valuable means to a great and holy end; *secondly*, that whilst religious forms are entitled to our highest consideration as auxiliaries to piety, they lose all their consequence, and are accounted abominable in the sight of Him who is perfect righteousness, whenever we stray so far from the teachings of the Bible as to rest our salvation on the performance

of these ceremonials, instead of making them ancillary to the spiritual things for which the ritual was ordained.

Brethren! let us earnestly entreat of our Almighty Parent to impress this lesson upon us every Sabbath, when we meet here for the duties of public worship. Let us pray of Him so to dispose our minds that we may cherish a profound veneration for the formulæ in which we express to Him all that is in our heart; in which we render to Him the tribute of our gratitude for benefits conferred; and implore a continuance of His divine protection. But let us also petition Him to keep ever before us the important Scriptural truth, that how sacred soever this prayerful communion may be, and indeed is, still it is only a form, like the sacrifices of olden times; and that its great value consists in the good impressions which it produces in our hearts, and the desire which it creates in us to perform the Divine will, "to love God with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our means," and to fulfil His sacred behest, conveyed in the Scripture section for this Sabbath day, קדשים תהיו כי קדוש אני יי אלהיכם "Ye shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy." [1]

[1] Lev. xix. 2.

# XIII.

## THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN RECTITUDE AND COVETOUSNESS.

*Preached on Sabbath, Nov.* 13, 5608 (1847).

PSALMS cxix. 34—7.

הבינני ואצרה תורתך ואשמרנה בכל לב : הדריכני בנתיב
מצותיך כי בו חפצתי : הט לבי אל עדותיך ואל אל בצע :
העבר עיני מראות שוא בדרכך חיני :

"O vouchsafe to bestow upon me understanding, so that I may preserve Thy doctrine, and so that I may observe it with an entire heart. Direct me in the path of Thy commandments, in which should be my delight. Incline my heart to Thy testimonies, and suffer it not to be swayed by covetousness. Turn away my eyes from deceitful appearances, and let me live in Thy ways."

THE Psalm now before us is composed of acrostics, formed of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, each of which is placed as the initial to seven or eight different lines respectively. The whole is arranged with exquisite skill, and affords us a fine specimen of the copious synonyma which the sacred language is capable of employing, to diversify and illustrate every subject of a moral and religious character.[1] The literary merits, however, of this

[1] Throughout the chapter, which consists of 176 verses, one of

Psalm are of little moment, when compared with the sublime ethics in which it abounds. It is a complete text-book of piety, in which simple and concise rules may be found for human conduct in every situation of life. It is well observed by Mendelssohn[2] that this Psalm cannot be effectually and feelingly read through at one and the same time, since many of the verses are suited to the particular circumstances in which mankind may be placed; he adds, that the sentences of which it is composed could not have been penned at one time, but must have been written by the author at different periods (שלא היו יוצאים מן הלב בפעם אחת כן אי אפשר גם שיהיו נכנסים בלב בפעם אחת). A very pious and learned Englishman is said to have recommended his children to read one verse of this chapter daily, so that they might go through the entire Psalm twice a year. I know not, my hearers, that we could do better than embody in our daily orisons the four verses of the text, which we, in concert with our families might offer up with great propriety at the throne of grace every morning at our rising, and every evening on our retiring to rest.

Regarding the passage of our text as a supplication, in which form the Holy Scriptures present it to our notice, it commences by asking God to bestow upon upon him that prays the gift of understanding. הבינני "O vouchsafe to grant me understanding," saith the Psalmist. But to what end? Not that he might glorify himself in the varied information which he should acquire; not that it might excite in him a

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the words · דרך · תורה · ארח · אמונה · משפט · דבור · אמירה · מצוה · פקודים · חקים · עדות is found in every verse, the 122nd excepted.

[2] Biour of Psalm cxix.

vain presumption for his own opinions, in opposition to the conclusions at which his fellow men should conscientiously arrive;[3] and not that it might inflame him with a fanatical zeal for observances of an especial character, or for prayers of a given length:[4] but he solicits understanding for a noble and practically moral purpose, ואצרה תורתך ואשמרנה בכל לב "that he might preserve the Divine doctrines, and observe them with an entire heart." In other words, he implores understanding of the great Giver of it, in order that it may lead him to be humble before God, to be just, charitable, and forbearing towards man, and to love his neighbour as himself. The Psalmist prays in the full and generous spirit of the Bible, which says—"Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the strong man boast in his physical strength, and let not the rich man boast in his riches; but let him who would boast himself boast in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, who executeth benevolence, justice, and charity upon the

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[3] On no subject may we record the sayings and principles of the ancient fathers of the synagogue with a higher feeling of satisfaction and veneration, than on the subject of spiritual pride. "Unpractical religion," say the Rabbins, "is nugatory, and only leads to wickedness" (Aboth 2. 8). Again, למה מזכירין את דברי שמאי והלל לבטלה? ללמד לדורות הבאים שלא יהי אדם עומד על דבריו שהרי אבות העולם לא עמדו על דבריהם: "Why are the words of Shammai and of Hillel quoted only to be contradicted? To teach later generations that no man should obstinately adhere to his own opinion, since even the greatest sages of antiquity abandoned their opinions on conviction" (Edioth, Mishna i. 4).

[4] אל תעש תפלתך קבע "Make not of thy prayers a set task" (Aboth ii. 13).

earth, because in these things I delight"[5]—of the Bible, which, after shewing where true wisdom, "which is more precious than rubies," is *not* to be found, plainly declares where *it is* to be met with, and in what it consists: ויאמר לאדם הן יראת יי היא הכמה וסור מרע בינה "And He said unto man, Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom; and to depart from evil denotes understanding."[6]

Fully impressed, therefore, with a sense of the importance of knowledge and understanding, and aware of the sacred purposes to which these endowments ought to be applied by a morally accountable being, the Psalmist continues הדריכני בנתיב מצותיך כי בו חפצתי "Direct me in the path of Thy commandments, in which should be my delight." How great soever our varied attainments and our experience may be, we all require divine counsel and heavenly guidance, כי תמול אנחנו "for we are of yesterday" and צל ימינו עלי ארץ "our days upon the earth dwindle into a mere shadow."[7] But unhappily we do not bear in mind this important truth. We do not always seek our indemnification in God and in the peaceful sentiment of conscious rectitude, for some of the earthly advantages, of which a wise and gracious Providence sees fit to deprive us. On the contrary, we suffer ourselves to be turned aside from the path of the divine commandments, by the allurements of the several temptations which the Lord permits to lie in our way for the purpose of proving our virtue and our

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[5] Jeremiah ix. 23, 24. [6] Job xxviii. 28. [7] Job viii. 9.

faith.[8] Now of all evil passions to which the human soul becomes a prey, covetousness is the most formidable, because it is the most successful instrument of corruption. Hence the force of the especial prayer which the Psalmist puts up: הט לבי אל עדותיך ואל אל בצע: "O incline my heart to Thy testimonies, and suffer it not to be swayed by a propensity to covetousness;" and to this particular verse I propose, brethren, to devote the larger part of the present sermon.

As the rod of Aaron is said to have swallowed up all the other rods, so the propensity for covetousness swallows up every other sentiment; and if we are to judge from the paramount influence which this evil passion continues to exert over mankind in our own times, we can scarcely avoid the sad conclusion, that it is a sin not to be overcome by knowledge, by experience, nor by an advanced state of civilization. It is indeed a solemn truth, that nothing can subdue covetousness but a firm and unshaken trust in God, and a just and lasting appreciation of the relative position in which man stands to his Almighty Sovereign and Judge, and to eternity. If we were asked to name any particular vice which would adequately represent the idea conveyed by the word שטן or "the evil principle" as it was understood by the ancient Hebrews, we could not possibly fix upon any that would so completely represent it as בצע or "covetousness." It is this "Satan" or "evil principle," that keeps up in the human heart a perpetual struggle against religion and duty; that wars with

[8] "The wicked are in the power of their passions; the righteous command their passions". (Bereshith Rabba apud Dukes, p. 194).

our maturest convictions; that thwarts, to a very considerable extent, most of the good resolutions which we imagine ourselves to have formed; that throws conscience into a state of slumber, and, withdrawing us farther and farther from God, brings us ultimately to prostrate ourselves before the idols of silver and gold. Day by day this melancholy fact is made evident to us in our intercourse with mankind; and we have, alas! but too many opportunities for observing, how honour, truth, benevolence and generosity yield, each in its turn, to the suggestions of covetousness, and how the infraction of the tenth article of the Decalogue may lead to a violation of nearly every precept of the second table of the Covenant. [9]

Let none of us imagine, my hearers, that we are free from the sin of covetousness, merely because we are of a sprightly disposition, are not habitually discontented, or because we can contemplate with satisfaction the success of a fellow-creature. The word בצע in the passage of the text, does not, I apprehend, apply so much to the sin of envying a neighbour's gifts or possessions (which is better met by the phraseology of the tenth article of the Decalogue לא תחמד), as it does to that unlawful and almost insatiable desire for gain, which, in the end, brings us to prefer the acquisition of wealth to the performance of God's holy will.

When we think of the sacred Sabbath-day on which we are met for worship, we cannot well discharge

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[9] All the commandments of the second Table of the Decalogue enjoin self-restraint and the curbing of unlawful desires.

from our minds the serious fact, at once painful and humiliating, that the sin of covetousness has led, and still continues to lead, many hundreds of our Jewish brethren, to violate the first table of the Decalogue also, or at least so much of it as bears upon the fourth commandment זכור את יום השבת לקדשו "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." To-day is the weekly return of that solemn institution which is ordained to commemorate the glorious work of the creation, to give to the human frame a seasonable respite from worldly toil, and to place the soul of man in communion with the Father of "the spirits of all flesh."[10] שבת היום ליי "It is the Lord's Sabbath"[11] the sacred septenary day, of which God has emphatically said, "Between Me and between Israel's sons it shall be an everlasting sign."[12]

Now if we would convince ourselves of the iron grasp with which covetousness seizes upon the human soul that has fallen a victim to its allurements, and if we would also learn how needful it is for all of us to supplicate our Heavenly Father, like the Psalmist of our text, to preserve us in mercy from this sin, we have only to look abroad to-day, and to observe how the Sabbath is disregarded and desecrated by many of our Jewish brethren. On this day there is a struggle going on in the breast of many an Israelite between religion and covetousness, between the worship of God and the worship of worldly gain. Nor do we give the worst complexion to the Sabbath desecration of our times, when we say that a struggle *is going* on, since that might induce a hope that the moral conflict

[10] Numb. xxvii. 16. [11] Exod. xvi. 25. [12] Exod. xxxi. 17.

would terminate in a victory over covetousness and cupidity; but, it is greatly to be feared, that with too many the struggle *is over*, and that the heart, faithless to the Eternal Lord of Hosts, has transferred its allegiance to a divinity like unto that which was adored in the desert during the absence of Moses from the camp, a divinity made of ingots of gold. Here indeed, brethren, we have great cause to bewail the ravages which covetousness is making on the soul, trampling to the dust faith, religious principle, and trust in God: here we witness as sad a spectacle as can be offered to the contemplation of a faithful disciple of Moses; here we behold many of the "children of the covenant" of Abraham, dishonouring the cause for which their great ancestor and his race were selected, that through them "all the nations of the earth might be blessed,"[13] and through them "the earth might be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas."[14]

Now amongst the faithless sons of Israel who profane the holy Sabbath, in order that they may pursue the path to which covetousness points the way, there are few to be found who do not believe the Bible to be inspired of God—few who do not admit the importance of the Sabbath, and the heavy sin which its desecration lays upon their souls. The conduct of a man who violates the Sabbath, and who at the same time denies the divinity of the Bible, and the binding force of the precepts of the Decalogue, is clear and intelligible; but it is hard to conceive how any one can bring himself deliberately to commit this sin, who is

[13] Gen. xxviii. 14. [14] Isaiah xi. 9.

under the full conviction that God will hold him responsible for it hereafter, unless he deludes himself with the expectation that the worldly advantages to be secured will remain very long in his possession, and that they will be, in some degree, commensurate to the magnitude of the prize to be obtained by his transgression. It should seem then that the insatiable passion for gain, at the sacrifice of religious principle, which carries away so many of us, has the effect of clouding our better judgment, whilst it dazzles us with the splendour of outward appearances.[15] Resolved upon increasing our stores at every cost, we do not pause to reflect upon the transitory and perishable nature of earthly treasures; but we are rather disposed to ascribe an eternity to these divinities which we have set up for our worship; and as long as we are under this delusion, we forget that the time is rapidly approaching when we must quit the possessions, for which we have bartered away our true birthright—our richest inheritance—and that we must go to render an account before the tribunal of Him, אשר לא ישא פנים ולא יקח שחד "who respecteth not persons, and who taketh no bribe."[16]

That some reflections of this kind were passing in the mind of the Psalmist appears probable, from the peculiar wording of the final verse of the text. No sooner does he admit that a struggle often takes place in the human breast between good and evil, between

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[15] אין אדם עובר עברה אלא אם כן נכנס בו רוח שטות "No man sins but in a state of mental blindness" (Sotah 3. *See* also Joel Briel on Ecclesiastes iv. 17).

[16] Deut. x. 17.

religious principle and sordid interest, between the worship due to God, and the fanatical adoration which man is prone to offer to the deities of the world; and no sooner does he pronounce the word בצע "covetousness," as the primary cause of this moral disease of the human heart, than he sincerely prays העבר עיני מראות שוא בדרכך חיני "O turn away mine eyes from deceitful appearances, and let me live in Thy ways."

Observe, my hearers, that the holy man designates earthly riches, מראות שוא "deceitful appearances." In this material age, an ethical writer who should call that for which we all so eagerly strive, and which so many of us hold to be the greatest good of life—"a shadow" or "a vain and deceitful appearance," would hardly fail to excite a smile; but let us not mistake the spirit of the Psalmist's prayer, which breathes nothing but wisdom and truthfulness. He is not indifferent to the blessings of abundance and ease; he knows that the recompense of wealth stimulates industry, promotes activity, and excites amongst men a beneficial spirit of emulation: he is also aware that riches procure for man various comforts, and that they enable him to perform the duties in which a generous heart must find its greatest delight, of a father to the orphan, a husband to the widow, and a protector to the poor. But when the sacred bard places riches in competition with a righteous life, with the consciousness of fulfilling the commandments of the Lord, with the self-denial it behoves him to practise, and the trials he ought to support, and chief of all, with the blessings of salvation and of immortal beatitude, he declares them to merit scarcely any consideration. Fully aware, therefore, of the powerful

allurements of covetousness, of the influence which this passion exerts over mortals, and of the gradual steps by which it leads its votaries from the true road of life; he not only prays that his heart may ever be disposed to God's service, but apprehensive of his own weakness, and fearing that the glitter of wealth might so captivate him, that to attain it, he should be led to violate some precept of the Divine Will; he further entreats of the Lord, to turn away his regards from riches altogether, and to influence him to consider them as "deceitful appearances," rather than suffer him to estimate the gifts of the earth as equal, much less superior, to the blessings of salvation, and of life eternal.

After having endeavoured to point out to you the true piety, the humility, and the sterling wisdom, which the things prayed for discover in him whose supplication is before us, I hope that I am not asking too much of you, my hearers, if I affectionately solicit you to have frequent recourse to this passage, and to echo its sublime sentiments.[17] Let the verses chosen for this day's pulpit lesson remind us all, brethren, of what even children know, though we require it to be impressed upon our minds each day of our lives, that the earth is not our home, but a mere caravansary, in which we are permitted to lodge for a short period;[18] and that even if our term of life were to be extended to one hundred years, or ten times such a period, this

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[17] אין דומה השונה פרקו מאה פעמים לשונהו מאה פעמים ואחת "There is no comparison between a hundred repetitions of a truth and a hundred *and one* repetitions" (Chagiga 9).

[18] The Mishna calls this life פרודור "the vestibule," and the life to come טרקלין "the festive hall" (Aboth iv. 16).

century or millennium would still be but a fraction of time, when compared with life eternal in the heavenly home which God has promised unto those that fear Him. It seems, indeed, as if the author of our Psalm had this truth deeply impressed on his mind; for, in the verse that immediately succeeds the lines of the text he exclaims: חקם לעבדך אמרתך אשר ליראתך "O confirm unto Thy servant Thy promise concerning them that fear Thee."[19]

By our future conduct, O brethren! let us endeavour to give vitality and energy to the lesson which we have learned. Let us prove by our lives, that whilst we are encouraged to put forth our industry and our talents by the prospect of gain—for Scripture bids us sow that we may reap, and plant that we may gather—we are strictly forbidden to persevere in our course whenever the indulgence of the desire after gain is calculated to interfere with the spirit of God's holy law, or with the practice of justice, charity, and fair and generous dealing towards our neighbours. By repeating frequently, therefore, the verses of our text, and by sincerely exerting ourselves to make our actions square with the prayers of our lips, we shall know how to resist the temptations which covetousness places in our way, and how to despise gain when the pursuit of it would offend our sense of what is religiously and morally right, and tend to turn away our thoughts from God and eternity.

Full of spiritual profit will the lesson of this day prove to us, brethren, if it shall induce us to place

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[19] Psalm cxix. 38.

constantly before us the law of God, which is the law of justice, mercy and truth, so that it may serve as a check to cupidity, the besetting sin of our age. We shall then be on our guard, if covetousness should ever entice us on the Sabbath day to violate the Lord's paternal commandment, and to renounce His holy service for a handful of coin: we shall be on our guard, if we should be ever tempted to appropriate to ourselves in secret, and without the fear of being discovered by man, anything that belongs to our neighbour; and also if we should ever be tempted to withhold from the poor the liberal support which it behoves us to furnish for their material wants, and for their moral and social advancement. And let us not, my hearers, bewail the gains which we immolate at the shrine of duty; but let us rather rejoice that we are moved by a pure Jewish spirit, which bears us nobly over meanness, avarice and dishonesty; and say, Brethren, can any sacrifice of earthly goods be too great if it leave us the consciousness of possessing such nobility of soul?

The experience of all men has led to the general conclusion that in the end, truth and honesty, faith and principle, prove victorious. An exceptional case may at times occur, when the man of principle is trodden down, whilst he who turns his back on religion is permitted to prosper in his evil career. This ought not, however, to weaken our faith in God, nor turn us aside from the path of virtue; but it should awaken our thoughts to what Scripture tells us, that it consists with the wise and inscrutable Providence of God that for a time "the wicked should flourish like

grass."[20] Above all, things let us be mindful of the great moral lesson taught in the passage of our text, and the truth of which we shall feel more and more, as we advance in our career, and as the world continues to fade from our view,—that riches endless, however they may administer to our several comforts during our pilgrimage here, cannot give us true peace of mind, cannot prolong our stay upon the earth for a single day, cannot secure for us God's favour, or open to us the gates to a blessed immortality. On the other hand let our text teach us, that every virtue we practice, every temptation we overcome, every trial which we endure with pious resignation to the Divine Will, and every sacrifice we make for religious principle, advances us a step in the efforts we are making, towards securing for ourselves that IMMORTAL CROWN, to obtain which, each day of the longest life might be wisely employed. The Psalmist determines well, then, if he must needs choose between the acquisition of riches, and the eternal favor of God, to pray that he may be disposed to regard riches as "vain and deceitful appearances," so long as he can satisfy himself that he is living in the way of the Lord. High above every consideration with the sacred poet, is his sense of duty as an Israelite to the revealed Word. טוב לי תורת פיך מאלפי זהב וכסף "I prefer the Law of Thy mouth," says he, "to thousands of silver and gold."[21]

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[20] Psalm xcii. 8.

[21] Psalm cxix. 72.

# XIV.

## ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE FINAL INGATHERING OF ISRAEL.

*A Lecture delivered on* שבת נחמו *August* 12, 5603 (1843).

עוד אבנך ונבנית בתולת ישראל עוד תעדי תפיך ויצאת במחול
משחקים: עוד תטעי כרמים בהרי שמרון נטעו נטעים
והללו: כי יש יום קראו נצרים בהר אפרים קומו ונעלה
ציון אל יי אלהינו: כי כה אמר יי רנו ליעקב שמחה
וצהלו בראש הגוים השמיעו הללו ואמרו הושע יי את
עמך את שארית ישראל: הנני מביא אתם מארץ צפון
וקבצתים מירכתי ארץ בם עור ופסח הרה ויולדת יחדו קהל
גדול ישובו הנה: בבכי יבאו ובתחנונים אובילם אוליכם
אל נחלי מים בדרך ישר לא יכשלו בה כי הייתי לישראל
לאב ואפרים בכרי הוא: שמעו דבר יי גוים והגידו באיים
ממרחק ואמרו מזרה ישראל יקבצנו ושמרו כרעה עדרו: כי
פדה יי את יעקב וגאלו מיד חזק ממנו:

Jeremiah xxxi. 4—11.

"I will build thee up again, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel; and thou shalt furnish thyself with thy tabrets, and thou shalt go forth in the dance of them that rejoice. Thou shalt yet plant vines on the hills of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and they shall make common use of it. For the day will arrive when the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise, and let us ascend to Zion, unto the Lord our God. For thus saith the Lord: Send forth a cry of joy for Jacob, and shout merrily at the head of nations; proclaim ye, praise ye, and say ye, the Lord hath saved thy people, the rem-

nant of Israel. Behold I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the extremities of the earth; amongst them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman, and her that travaileth with child; altogether they shall return thither a great assembly. They shall return with weeping, and with supplications will I bring them; I will conduct them near the water brooks, in a direct way, in which they shall not stumble. For I have been a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. Hear ye the word of the Lord, O nations! and proclaim it to the distant isles; and say, He that hath dispersed Israel, will gather him in, and will keep him as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath ransomed Jacob, and hath redeemed him from One that is stronger than he."

THE subject of the lecture for the present Sabbath is the final ingathering of the whole house of Israel; a doctrine which is clearly set forth by the Prophet Jeremiah, in the 30th chapter of his book, as well as in the succeeding chapter, from which the passage of the text is extracted.

The prophetical writings refer to two distinct restorations or ingatherings of the Jewish people; the one is the return of the tribe of Judah from Babylonia after a captivity of seventy years; and the other relates to the final ingathering of every branch of the house of Jacob, including the ten tribes, which were carried away from Samaria, by Shalmanessar of Assyria. The passage of the text obviously points to the latter restoration; but no mention is made in Scripture concerning the time when this event is to be accomplished: all that we can learn from the prophetic teaching is, that it is to be contemporaneous with Messiah's advent.

The unpractised reader of the prophetical writings is apt to fall into the error of confounding together the prophecies concerning the two restorations, and of mistaking one event for the other. But it ought

to be borne in mind, that the Prophets seldom refer to the Babylonish captivity, without mentioning the country where the Hebrews are exiled, or the monarch who is to order their deliverance. Some doubt might exist to which of the two ingatherings the following passage of Isaiah points: "He establisheth the word of His servant, and accomplisheth the counsel of His messengers: He saith unto Jerusalem, Be thou inhabited, and unto the cities, Be ye built up;[1] but all ambiguity is removed by what follows: "Who sayeth unto Cyrus, Thou art my shepherd."[2] Again, nothing can be clearer than the phraseology in which Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the return from Babylonia is couched. "Thus saith the Lord: After the accomplishment of the seventy years at Babylon, I will visit you, and I will perform unto you my good promise, to bring you back to this place."[3]

But the prophecies that bear upon the final ingathering of the twelve tribes of Israel are very differently worded; and they most frequently connect with this event, the coming of the Messiah. The Prophet Jeremiah is commanded, at the opening of the thirtieth chapter of his book to commit to writing the following prophecy: "Behold the time shall come, saith the Lord, when I will bring back the captivity of my people of Israel, and of Judah, saith the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land which I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."[4] It is then set forth that the Hebrews will no more be subjected to the oppressive dominion of the heathen; but that they will be governed by their own rulers of the

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1 Isaiah xliv. 26. [2] Ibid. ver. 28. [3] Jerem. xxix. 10. [4] Ibid. xxx. 3.

royal house of David. "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and I will break asunder thy chains, and strangers shall no longer enslave him. But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them."[5] It is very evident that this prophecy was not accomplished at the return from Babylonia. The exiles who set out from the banks of the כבר (Chebar) under Zerubabel consisted merely of the tribe of Judah, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away; but Jeremiah speaks distinctly not of Judah only, but also of Israel; i. e. the ten tribes, who, as a body, have never returned, nor have even been heard of, since their deportation by the Assyrian conqueror. Now as the Scriptures teach that God never speaks in vain, nor makes a promise which He does not perform, it follows that this prediction of Jeremiah remains to be accomplished.

The prophecy concerning the ingathering of the Hebrews is repeated, in a more amplified form, in the thirty-first chapter; it foretells the restoration of the whole house of Israel to their former greatness. "I will build thee up again, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel; and thou shalt be furnished with thy tabrets, and thou shall go forth in the dance of them that rejoice."[6] Heralds are appointed to call the people to the Temple, saying, "Arise and let us ascend to Zion, unto the Lord our God;"[7] and the Lord Himself promises to lead the Hebrews, and to shew

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[5] Jeremiah xxx. 8, 9. [6] Ibid xxxi. 4. [7] Ibid. xxxi. 6. 9.

a tender regard for all who are infirm and afflicted in body.[8] At the 15th verse, Rachel, the mother of Joseph, who represents the ten tribes[9], is introduced as having just risen from her grave; and she is plunged in grief and despair, because she cannot find her children in the land of the patriarchs. But the sorrows of the Jewish mother are assuaged, and her tears are dried up by reason of the words of consolation and of hope which God charges His Prophet to pronounce to her. "Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and let not the tears flow from thine eyes; for there is a reward for thy work, saith the Lord, and they [thy children] shall return again out of the land of the adversary: there is hope for thy future, saith the Lord, and thy children shall return to their own border."[10] The Prophet, desirous of inculcating the doctrine so frequently enforced in the Scriptures, that before Israel, as a body, can regain the favour of the Almighty, they must sincerely repent of their sins,[11] next represents Ephraim bewailing his past iniquities, and soliciting forgiveness at the throne of grace. "I have heard Ephraim lamenting thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastened, like a calf that was untrained; bring me back, and I shall return, for thou art the Lord my God"[12]; and no sooner does Ephraim become contrite, than the Lord graciously pardons His erring child: He receives him back in love, saying, "Is not Ephraim my cherished son? Is he not my darling

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[8] Jeremiah xxxi. 8. [9] Compare Ezekiel xxxvii. 16—20
[10] Jeremiah xxxi. 16, 17. [11] Compare Deuteronomy xxx. 7—10.
[12] Jeremiah xxxi. 18.

child? The more I speak of him, the more do I bear him in mind; therefore my bowels do yearn towards him; surely I will have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."[13] The prophecy closes with the assurance, that the Hebrews shall in after-times deserve the benediction of their fellow men, who shall bless the Israelites in every one of their cities, saying "יברכך נוה צדק הר הקדש "May the Lord bless thee, O abode of righteousness, O mountain of holiness."[14]

The prophecy of Isaiah, at the commencement of the second chapter, relates (as will presently be shewn) to the ingathering of Israel, whilst it brings into immediate connection with that event, the coming of the Messiah. The Prophet teaches that "in the latter days" the Temple will be firmly established (נכון) on the summit of Zion's hill, and that all nations will flow unto it. "And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us ascend to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; in order that He may teach us His ways, and that we may walk in His paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."[15] A personage is then introduced who, according to most of the Hebrew and nearly all the non-Jewish commentators, is the Messiah; and his office is thus described: "And he shall judge among the nations, and he shall arbitrate between the several peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn

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[13] Jeremiah xxxi. 20. [14] Ibid ver. 23. [15] Isaiah ii. 3.

war any more."[16] We have here a very intelligible idea of the works of the Messiah. He is to re-establish the Temple, gather in the captivity, annihilate tyrannical force, secure the triumph of mind and the dominion of love, and to bring into harmony all men as the equal children of the one great Father. Agreeably to this prophecy, the universal recognition of the Messiah is not to depend upon accident, or the mere exertion of Faith; his own works are to be his credentials, and no mortal will be able to resist the acknowledgment of his Messianic character, when he shall have executed the task which is appointed to him by the Scriptures. There can be little doubt that the prediction of Isaiah, just quoted, is to be taken in connection with the final ingathering of Israel; since we find the prophet Micah pronouncing the same oracle, in precisely similar words,[17] and combining with it as *a contemporaneous event* a prophecy of the restoration of the Hebrews. "In that day, saith the Lord, I will gather the halting, and the exile will I gather, and him that I have afflicted; and I will ordain the halting one to be a remnant, and the weary one a powerful nation; and the Lord shall reign over them on mount Zion for ever."[18]

There is however in the twenty-third chapter of Jeremiah a remarkable passage, which fully establishes the doctrine held by the house of Israel, that the advent of the Messiah, and the great ingathering of Judah and Israel, are to be synchronical events.

ואני אקבץ את שארית צאני מכל הארצות אשר הדחתי
אתם שם והשיבתי אתהן על נויהן ופרו ורבו׃

[16] Isaiah ii. 4. [17] Micah i. 1—3. [18] Ibid. ver. 6 and 7.

והקמתי עליהם רעים ורעום ולא ייראו עוד ולא יחתו ולא יפקדו נאם יי : הנה ימים באים נאם יי והקמתי לדוד צמח צדיק ומלך מלך והשכיל ועשה משפט וצדקה בארץ : בימיו תושע יהודה וישראל ישכון לבטח וזה שמו אשר יקראו יי צדקנו :

"And I will gather in the remnant of my flock from all the countries through which I have dispersed them, and I will bring them back again to their own habitation; and they shall be fruitful, and they shall multiply. And I will raise up for them shepherds, and they shall feed them, and they shall be no more in fear or dread, neither shall they experience any want, saith the Lord. Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will raise up unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his time Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell in security, and this is the name by which you shall call him, "The Lord our Righteousness."[19] Here the prophet connects inseparably the restoration and the temporal prosperity of Israel with the Messiah's advent. That the restoration here predicted cannot refer to the Babylonian captivity is clear; since Jeremiah speaks of the gathering in of Israel "out of all the lands, where they are dispersed"; and further because Israel and Judah are mentioned conjointly. Besides which, the Prophet teaches that such wondrous manifestations of God's providence are to attend the final ingathering of His people, as to surpass even the miracles performed in Egypt; and he adds that

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[19] Jeremiah xxiii. 3—7.

the departure from Egypt, which the Jews have never ceased to record in their praises to God, will not then be mentioned; but that the Israelites will address their Maker as the Lord, who hath restored the remnant of the long-lost tribes to their own soil. "Therefore the time will come, saith the Lord, when they shall no longer say, The Lord liveth, who did bring up Israel's sons out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth, who hath brought up and conducted the seed of the house of Israel from the north country, and from all the lands whereunto I have driven them; and they shall dwell upon their own soil."[20] This prophecy has certainly not yet been fulfilled: of the remnant of the ten tribes nothing for many centuries has been heard, upon which the mind can rest with any approach to certainty; and we Jews still continue to make the wondrous Exodus from Egypt, a leading feature in all the prayers and praises which we address to the Almighty.

The Messiah referred to in the chapter from which I have just quoted, and who is to effect the restoration of the Jewish people, is styled by the Prophet, "The Lord our Righteousness;" and this denomination has induced many persons to believe that the Jews expect that Messiah is to be a divine person. I need hardly urge upon your attention, my hearers, that such is not the case. The practised reader of the Hebrew Scriptures will be well aware, that when the sacred penman represents a great purpose of God as about to be accomplished, when an individual

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[20] Jeremiah xxiii. 7, 8.

is indicated as being instrumental in effecting it, and even when a sign is given to mark its fulfilment, the name of Jehovah is found appended to the person who is chosen to be the Lord's instrument, or to the sensible sign which commemorates the great deed that has been performed. After the hand of Abraham is withheld from sacrificing his son, the patriarch raises an altar and names it יי יראה ("Jehovah will regard);"[21] and on the defeat of the Amalekites, Moses also builds an altar and calls it יי נסי ("Jehovah my prover")[22]. Now it can hardly be supposed, that the altar either of Abraham or of Moses was a divine person; and yet they are both called by the name of the Most High. But we have only to consult the thirty-third chapter of Jeremiah, in order to satisfy ourselves completely that the words יי צדקנו (The Lord our Righteousness), which we have just seen applied to the Messiah, cannot be claimed, on any fair grounds, as an evidence in favour of the divinity of this personage. "Behold the days will come, saith the Lord, when I will accomplish the good promise which I have made to the house of Israel, and concerning the house of Judah. In these days and at that time, I will cause to sprout forth unto David a righteous branch, and he shall execute right and justice in the land. In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in security, and this is the name אשר יקרא לה (by which she shall be called) the Lord our Righteousness" (ver. 14, 15). From the above passage it is certain, that the very same words which some imagine to invest the Messiah with a divine character, are equally applied to the city of Jerusalem.

[21] Genesis xxii. 14. [22] Exodus xvii. 15.

Returning to the subject more immediately connected with the passage of our text, we find the final ingathering of Israel very plainly prophesied by Ezekiel in the eleventh chapter of his book, and especially in the concluding part of the thirty-seventh chapter. In the latter instance, the Prophet is commanded to take two sticks, and to write upon one "Judah," which is to represent the two tribes who adhere to the Davidical dynasty; and upon the other the name of "Joseph," which represents the ten tribes of Israel, or the kingdom of Samaria; and to join the two sticks together, so that they may be considered as one. Ezekiel is informed that this proceeding will excite the curiosity of his people, who will enquire what it is intended to convey: upon which the Prophet is to speak as follows: "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel who are his associates, and I will unite them with him, with the stick of Judah, and I will make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand. And these sticks upon which thou writest, shall be in thy hands before their eyes. And speak to them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will take the children of Israel from the midst of the nations, whither they be gone, and I will gather them in from every side, and I will bring them to their own soil. And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and they shall all have one king; and they shall no more be two nations, nor shall they any more be divided into two kingdoms."[23] This prophecy evidently could

[23] Ezekiel xxxvii. 19—23.

not have referred to the restoration from Babylon, since it speaks in distinct terms of the ingathering and the re-union of the whole of the twelve tribes of Israel. Zechariah who prophesied during the rebuilding of the second Temple, and consequently *after* the return of the Babylonian captivity, also predicts the restoration of the Hebrews. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will save my people from the east country, and from the country where the sun sets. And I will conduct them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be unto me for a people."[24] And again, "And it shall come to pass, that as ye were execrated amongst the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall become a blessing: fear not, but confide."[25]

From what has been advanced, you will have perceived, my hearers, that the doctrine of the final ingathering of the Jewish people is clearly set forth in our holy Scriptures. You will also have learned that this event is not to be accomplished by the ordinary means adopted by mortals for colonising any particular district; but that it is to be effected by the wonder-working hand of the Lord. If the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel should appear to any of us, brethren, beyond the pale of possibility, we ought not to be unmindful of the past history of our race. No one will question the fact, that the Israelites were enslaved by the Pharaohs, and afterwards freed from the yoke without a sword having been unsheathed, or a bow

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[24] Zech. viii. 7, 8. [25] Ibid. ver. 13.

trung. To say nothing of the intervening period of Jewish history, comprising more than a thousand years, no one will seriously deny, that Nebuchadnezzar carried into slavery a large Hebrew population, and that after the time which the Bible had fixed for the duration of the captivity, an edict was published and executed by Cyrus, setting free the Jewish slaves, and permitting them to return to Judæa. We have every reason to suppose that the accomplishment of these events appeared no less impossible to our fathers, than the final ingathering of all the remnant of Israel seems to us, yet they were brought about by God's infallible Providence. But, brethren, what is the entire history of the Abrahamic race, but a series of miracles? So wonderful indeed is the preservation of our people, that if we were to imagine a period—say for instance the close of the present century—when the house of Israel should lose every particle of their religious identity, and be no longer distinguished as at other times, it is next to certain that the men of the succeeding century would have great doubts, whether as a religious body, the Jews had really survived the fall of Jerusalem, for the space of nineteen hundred years; and the argument advanced for entertaining the doubt would be to a very great extent, a valid one, that the circumstance is contrary to general experience and to probability. We should therefore weigh well our words before we presume to set any limits to what it is possible for the Almighty to accomplish for and through the Jewish people. Indeed the continued preservation of the house of Israel is in itself a great fact, and is well calculated to confirm us in the belief that it is one of the means which the Lord has wisely

ordered to the end prophesied in the passage of our text. Scripture plainly tells us "that God is not a man that He should lie, or the Son of Man that he should repent; but that what He says He will do, and what He speaks He will confirm."[26] Now the Lord hath given His word to gather in the descendants of the holy patriarchs; and for the purpose of performing this promise, and of placing the Hebrews in a condition *to be restored*, His gracious Providence has constantly hovered about them; and He has made even the persecutions which they have suffered, conduce to keep them distinct in their marriages, distinct in their ritual observances, distinct in the language which they employ for praise, and prayer, and supplication to the Most High, distinct in every thing which relates to their spiritual concerns. In this sense, (and in this only) the Jews of the present day are as much "a nation within a nation," as they were at any period of their history before their political nationality was annihilated.

Out of the lecture of this day arise two questions of a practical character, and they may both be answered in a few words. First, how does the doctrine of a final ingathering affect the Jew in a spiritual point of view? Secondly, how does it affect the Jew in his social and political relations? Spiritually considered, the doctrine of the final restoration ought to have great influence over our thoughts and our actions. Without a future restoration, our history would be perhaps one of the greatest incongruities ever presented to the consideration of man; without

[26] Numbers xxiii. 19.

a future restoration the problem of the continued identity of the Hebrew people would be almost incapable of being solved; without a restoration, we should have no connection with the past or with the future, but we should appear like a community which had been the sport of chance, and in regard to which Providence had no fixed design. But entertaining a full belief in this doctrine, we are enabled to discover why the Lord has so peculiarly dealt with our fathers and with us. A bright and glorious future opens to us, and we have a full view of the part which we are to fill in the closing scene of that great moral drama which the Jews have represented upon the broad theatre of the world. It teaches us that we are preserved for a time, when through our instrumentality or that of the Messiah who is to be born of our race, strife and contention for worldly advantages, and the ever jarring discords arising from differences of religious belief are to cease; when the roar of the cannon will no longer be heard, and the sword will rust in its scabbard; when harmony and love and brotherly kindness and sympathy will universally prevail, or to speak in the highly wrought language of Hebrew poetry, when "the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the leopard shall abide with the kid, the calf and the fatling and the young lion shall feed together, and the infant child shall lead them."[27] We connect our restoration with the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, when the Hebrews will be conducted by an Almighty hand to that spot of earth, made memorable as the cradle of revelation, to that hallowed hill, from which "the Law" and "the Word" are to go forth unto all

[27] Isaiah xi. 6.

the nations of the Globe. Now as it is the Lord's declared will that the solid peace and happiness which He has promised to mankind in "the latter days" are to be accomplished through us, our minds dear brethren, ought to be steadily directed to our vocation, present and prospective; and we should so conduct ourselves towards God and man, as to be accounted worthy of the spiritual agency which the Arbiter of the universe has committed to the race of Abraham.

On our actual social and political relations however, the doctrine of our final ingathering does not exercise the slightest possible influence, because that event, as we believe, points to a time when the Lord will work a complete change in the principle of state government, and will annul the political constitution of every empire of the world. Though we confidently hope for the fulfilment of the prophecies that announce our restoration, and though we pray for their speedy accomplishment, because of the universal blessings which the predicted event will diffuse; still the sentiments which we cherish for our native land, as Englishmen and citizens, are no more affected by the doctrine of restoration, than are the sentiments of the large body of our non-Jewish compatriots by the doctrine which many of them maintain of the millennium. The believers in both doctrines may cherish their conscientious convictions, without suffering these varying articles of faith to weaken in the slightest degree their affection for their common country, or to diminish the ardent zeal which it becomes us all to manifest for our monarchical and other national institutions, and for the prosperity and glory of the British empire.

## XV.

## ON THE 130TH PSALM.

*A Lecture delivered on Sabbath, Nov,* 11. 1848 (5609).

THE hundred and thirtieth Psalm forms the subject of the present lecture.

"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear Thou my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the sound of my supplications. If Thou, O Lord, shouldest constantly bear in mind iniquities, O Lord, who would be able to stand? But with Thee there is forgiveness, in order that Thou mayest be feared. I hope in the Lord, my soul doth hope; and in His word do I confide. My soul hopeth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; yea, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel confide in the Lord; for with the Lord is mercy, and with Him there is plenteous redemption. And He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

This Psalm belongs to the class called המעלות, of which there are fifteen in number. Four of them are attributed to David, one is ascribed to the pen of Solomon, and the other ten (including the hymn before us), give no indication of their author. The headings of the Psalms, however, are not always to be relied on, since many of those headings were beyond a question superadded centuries after the authors of the Psalms had ceased to exist. Notwithstanding

then the title, "A Song of Degrees of David," or "A Song of Degrees of Solomon," many approved biblical scholars attribute the whole fifteen Psalms to the same pen, and the period when they were composed, about the close of the Babylonian captivity. The word לשלמה or לדוד, does not of itself clearly establish the fact, that the Psalm was written by the person named, since the very same phraseology would be employed to denote a hymn composed in honour of Solomon or of David.

The word המעלות is derived from עלה, "to go up." The generally received opinion therefore is, that the fifteen Psalms having this heading, were composed either for the occasion of "going up" out of Babylonia, or of "going up" to Jerusalem on one of the appointed festivals; hence they are very characteristically named by Herder, as well by Eichhorn, "Hymns for a Journey."[1]

But whatever be the etymology of המעלות, or whoever be the author of the section of hymns bearing that name, certain it is, that these fifteen Psalms are amongst the finest of the immortal collection, not only in point of high poetic merit, but also in regard to the religious fervour and undying trust in God which they breathe. The Psalm now under consideration has been at all times fixed upon by the Hebrews for penitential occasions, whilst many of our non-Jewish brethren have, I venture to think, appropriately given it a place in their service for the

[1] Luther translates שיר המעלות Ein Lied im höhern Chor, "A Song in the higher Choir;" thus connecting the name of the Psalm with the manner of its musical execution.

dying. Even the English version must impress every reader with a sense of the exceeding sublimity of the Psalm; but any one capable of appreciating it in the original, must recognise in it especial idiomatic beauties, to which no translation can render adequate justice.

To enter fully into the spirit of this Psalm, we must regard it as the language of the heart poured forth in a time of misfortune, of bereavement, or of bodily suffering; ממעמקים קראתיך יי. "Out of the depths do I cry unto Thee, O Lord!" "The depths" is a figure often employed by the Hebrew poets to denote profound sorrow, or excessive agony, whether of the body or of the mind. There are, unhappily, in this life of pilgrimage, too many human creatures, whose sufferings are only known to themselves and to God. Many there are whose poverty obliges them to remove themselves so far from those haunts where wealth and abundance are to be found, that their groans are not heard by the children of luxury or the votaries of pleasure. They call to man for help, but their cry is not heeded: since the distance which separates poverty from wealth, may, for all practical purposes, be compared to "the depths" to which suffering humanity is consigned, forgotten like the dead out of sight, and incapable of attracting the friendly notice of those more favoured sons of fortune, who are rejoicing in their portion on the upper earth. But where human pride and selfishness refuse to appear, Divine mercy and goodness do not disdain to enter; and whilst many amongst us avoid the spot where suffering and sickness abide, on the plea that the distance is too great, that our time is too

much in demand, that the hovel to which we are called is too wretched, and the scene of misery too harrowing, the gracious Lord does not abandon His afflicted children, and does not suffer any state of wretchedness however appalling, or disease however loathsome, to interpose between mortal suffering and His Divine Presence. Well then may the Psalmist say, ממעמקים קראתיך יי "Even out of the depths can I call upon Thee, O Lord." Man may forsake me, but יי שמעה בקולי תהיינה אזנך קשבות לקול תחנוני "O Lord, Thou wilt hear my voice, and Thy ears will be attentive to the voice of my supplication." But though poverty and suffering do not shut man out from God; how does the case stand with regard to sin? Can one who has transgressed call with confidence upon Him who is essentially pure and holy? Can the child of sin gain the ear of the Father that hateth sin? Yes, saith the Psalmist, if the sinner have repented of his evil ways, and have thus made his peace with God; for the sacred penman informs us, that though the Lord abhorreth sin, He no longer remembereth it after due atonement is made. Nay more, he tells us, that it is only by means of the loving kindness of the Lord, who, when we have repented, doth regard us with perfect forgiveness, that mankind are enabled to endure. אם עונות תשמר יה יי מי יעמד "If Thou, O Lord! didst preserve a remembrance of our iniquities, O Lord! who could be able to stand?" But mercy and pardon are amongst the brightest jewels in the diadem of divinity; כי עמך הסליחה "for with Thee is forgiveness." "*With Thee*," mark well the words—God does not

delegate to any other being the prerogative of pardoning our sins; for, far different is the forgiveness of the Lord, from that forgiveness which is practised by man to man. When one mortal offends another, or injures another, and an estrangement takes place; and when the peace-maker interposes and entreats the injured man to pardon his erring brother, and to put away the remembrance of his evil doing, what is the reply the peace-maker generally receives, even in the case where the person injured would pass for a man totally free from obduracy and revenge? The answer is this: I forgive the injury, but I cannot forget it. How ill would it be for us, my hearers, if the forgiveness vouchsafed to us by the Lord were not exercised in a nobler and a far more merciful spirit? God not only pardons the sinner, but He puts away the remembrance of his sin. He gives us this assurance through His prophet Ezekiel. "If," saith He, "the evil-doer becomes truly penitent and amends his ways, כל פשעיו אשר עשה לא יזכרו לו, not one of the transgressions which he hath committed shall be remembered unto him."[2]

The Psalmist proceeds to show how indispensable it is that the Lord should so deal with mankind. If we were to live under the apprehension that no penance or amendment could absolve us from sin, but that God had our past iniquities constantly before Him, awaiting the time and opportunity to fall upon us with the weight of His wrath for the errors of a whole life, we should be plunged into despair; we should walk upon the earth as

[2] Ezekiel, xviii. 22.

perpetual mourners; we should regard the world as a grave and nothing else; and thus we should not be able to love God as He demands of us, nor to serve Him and fear Him as His children, and as the creatures of His hands. The mercy and clemency of our heavenly Father bring us back, therefore, to Him even after we may have strayed from His commands, and inspire us to regain the time which we have misspent and to atone for our past iniquities by devoting the remainder of our lives to love Him and to fear Him. Truly then saith the Psalmist כי עמך הסליחה למען תורא "for with Thee is forgiveness in order that Thou mayst be truly feared." The consoling doctrine of revelation, that generous and entire forgiveness forms a distinguishing attribute of the Deity, is man's stay and staff; it alone sustains him in affliction, because it presents itself to his mind as the only anchor of hope to which he can cling. This is very clearly set forth by the author of our Psalm: and no sooner does he arrive at the conclusion, that God does not preserve a remembrance of iniquity, but dispenses pardon without exacting any condition save that of true repentance from the evil-doer, than he exclaims, קויתי יי קותה נפשי ולדברו הוחלתי "I hope in the Lord, yea, my soul doth hope, and I place reliance on His word."

Let us here note, that a true knowledge of God and of His dealings with man befriends us in the hour of need; that it calms our sorrows, takes off the edge of our sufferings, and prevents us from falling into despair; and here let us learn that it leads us to resign ourselves into His hand בלב שלם ובנפש חפצה

"with a perfect heart and a willing mind."[3] Woe to the man who in the day of sickness, of bereavement, or of tribulation, is entirely bereft of hope; for him there is no sun, no light, no rest, no peace, no friend. He is like one condemned to be a perpetual wanderer in a waste howling wilderness, where nothing grows to relieve the eye or to cheer the spirit. But such cannot be the fate of him who devotes himself to the true science of life, and acquires a knowledge of the dispensations of Providence; for though misfortune may assail him and deprive him of his riches, of his health, or his offspring; it cannot wrest from him his hope. To God and to His holy word, the pious Israelite in affliction will firmly cling; and how low soever the hand of grief may have pressed him down, still ממעמקים "From the very depths" will he cry unto the Lord, saying in the fulness of faith, קויתי יי קותה נפשי ולדברו הוחלתי "I hope in the Lord, yea my soul doth hope, and I place my reliance in His word."

The Psalmist adds, נפשי ליי משמרים לבקר שמרים לבקר "My soul watcheth for the Lord more than the watchers for the morning, yea, the watchers for the morning." The Chaldee paraphrases משמרים לבקר "More than they that observe the morning watches," making the passage allude to the שֹׁמְרִים (watchmen) near the hill of Zion, who watched anxiously for the first glimpse of daylight, in order to announce that the time was arrived for the morning oblation. But the words may surely admit of a wider application. The שומרים (watchmen) near the temple, were not

[3] 1 Chronicles xxviii. 9.

the only mortals that kept vigils. In the days of the Psalmist there were, and in our own times there are, many suffering creatures who are watching and praying for the return of morning light. When the body is tormented by pain, when the mind is oppressed by care, or when the conscience is ill at ease, the couch offers no rest, nor does the night bring sleep. The child of sorrow feels the night more burdensome than the day, whilst restless on his pillow he counts each passing hour; and though the light of the dawn may not bring any mitigation of his woes, still he longs, and anxiously watches for its return, when he may again behold activity in the world of men, and interchange his thoughts with his fellow-beings. Now the Psalmist tells us that he also watches for the dawn, but his vigils have this object, that he may again commune with God in his morning prayer, that he may renew to the Creator the expressions of his love, his gratitude, and his firm religious trust.

Frequent are the passages in the Scripture recommending confidence in the Almighty; but I do not think that we could light upon any page in the whole of the sacred volume where the blessings and the advantages of religious trust are more powerfully depicted than in this exquisite Psalm. At the next verse the inspired poet offers himself to us as a teacher, and seeks to give a practical tendency to his hymn, by exhorting his Jewish brethren to attune their hearts to the same sentiments as those which fill his bosom, and to place all their hopes in God. יחל ישראל אל יי "Let Israel hope in the Lord;" from Him let them seek their salvation; it is their duty; it is their interest. Moreover, he shows good and sufficient grounds for his

recommendation—כי עם יי החסד "For goodness abideth with the Lord." He hath the means of removing our sorrows, of calming our troubled spirits, and of rendering us eternally happy; and what is more, the Lord taketh an especial delight in dispensing those blessings. It must not be imagined that the Lord can grow weary by reason of the innumerable petitions sent up to Him for support by the myriads of His creatures, nor that the divine bounty can become exhausted by reason of the unceasing flow of the Lord's benevolence into every channel of the vast creation. והרבה עמו פדות "For with Him there is abundant deliverance." Our heavenly Father hath Himself assured us that "the hand of the Lord is not short,"[4] and that His power to save is not restricted by time or place; and no people have had more frequent opportunities of proving the truth of this gracious declaration than the children of Israel. If we follow the history of this wondrous race, from the time when Jacob left Canaan for Egypt; if we note their deliverance from the Pharoahs, from the Amalekites, the Amorites, the Midianites, the Philistines, and the Chaldeans; if we consider how the providential interposition of the Lord caused the rod of power to fall from the grasp of Haman, and how He blunted the sword in the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes—or if, descending into more modern times, we reflect how the "Guardian of Israel" preserved a remnant of His flock from the destructive frenzy of the Crusades, and the devouring cruelty of the Inquisition, we can hardly fail to admit that the history of the Jews forms

[4] Numb. xi. 23.

one long and uninterrupted chain of evidence of God's untiring and inexhaustible redemption. The Psalmist in his own times had learned so many instances in which the divine promise had been fulfilled, that he did not hesitate to cheer his brethren in faith by the assurance that the covenant of mercy would never be broken: והוא יפדה את ישראל מכל עונותיו "God will redeem Israel from all their iniquities." The cause is here placed for the effect, since all the troubles that befell the Jewish people were produced by their iniquities. Most consoling however is the doctrine, that the remnant of the house of Jacob will not only attain in God's wise and fitting time the exalted position in the world to which each phase in their history directly points, but that every individual of the fold will, if truly penitent, find in the mercy of the Lord, full redemption for all his transgressions.

Such, then, is the analysis of this exquisite Psalm. I am very far, my hearers, from being satisfied with the attempt I have made to illustrate it; but if I shall have so far succeeded as to induce you to study it, and to have recourse to it in all times of suffering and of tribulation, it will no doubt offer to your minds sources of consolation and of religious delight, which the analysis given to day has but very imperfectly indicated.

## XVI.

## ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE CONSECRATION OF THE CEMETERY OF THE WEST LONDON SYNAGOGUE.

*On Friday,* 14*th* תמז, 5603 (*July* 7, 1843).

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Brethren,

Since it has pleased God to disconnect us from the land which, in the days of our ancestors, was politically ours, we have yet continued to regard with great reverence certain localities, to which we attach ideas of peculiar sanctity. The place which is foremost in our veneration, is that where we offer our adoration to the Most High, and rejoice in the performance of that religious duty, which God has prescribed and ordained. But scarcely inferior in the estimation of all the Sons of Israel, is the deep respect that we bear to the sanctuary where the dust of our departed brethren and sisters is deposited, awaiting the awful day when the majestic voice of the Lord shall call a second creation into existence.

Although many people, both in ancient and modern times, have surpassed us in the pomp of their burial places; although the tombs consecrated by us to the memory of those who are dear to us, present no appearance of grandeur to the eye of the indifferent

beholder, yet is there no one in whom there breathes a deeper feeling of veneration for the name, the honor, or the receptacle of those who are no more on earth, than the Israelite when he treads the hallowed grounds where the dead dwell in peace.

May this filial, this fraternal affection, borne by the living to the dead, never cease to be a prominent feature in the character of Israel! The ties which connect us with the living may be, and unhappily too often are, weakened by external influences; but the connection with the generations that preceded us on the way to the kingdom of God, is as unchangeable as the face of death. The impressions made on our minds by the moving world around us, are not always of a salutary kind; but the reflections drawn from the contemplation of the tomb, can never fail to make us sensible of our true condition, and to remind us of our essential duty.

כי שאל נא לדור ראשון וכונן לחקר אבותם "Enquire of the generations that are past," says the man of sorrow, "and prepare thyself to question their fathers."[1] כי תמול אנחנו ולא נדע כי צל ימינו עלי ארץ: הלא הם יורוך יאמרו לך ומלבם יוציאו מלים: "Indeed we are but of yesterday, nothing do we know, only a shadow are our days on earth. Truly these will instruct thee, and will breathe words from their bosom."[2]

This, then, brethren, is a holy business in which we are now engaged. We come here to open the "House of Life," בית חיים (as we significantly call this sacred spot) for all those cherished fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, whom the Lord, according to

[1] Job viii. 8. [2] Ibid. 9. 10.

His merciful dispensation, may summon from our earthly communion, to dwell with Him in His realms of bliss. Here shall our children, and our children's children, shed the tribute of their tears over the ashes of those whose memory lives in their grateful hearts; and on their tombs shall they repeat the heaven-directed vow, to continue in the practice of that faith and of those virtues, which gained for their departed ancestors and friends the love and respect of those who attended them in sadness to their last abode on this spot of earth.

This shall be the treasury-house where every brother of our community shall deposit, in sacred confidence, those who have been dearer to him than all his possessions in life, and here they shall repose together in one undisturbed brotherly union. For *here* there is no difference of persons; here vanishes all the tinsel with which the institutions of life deck out those who tread the stage of this world; here the rich man is forsaken by his wealth, and the beauteous form is stripped of its comeliness; here at the threshold of life eternal, we discard all distinctions, all artificial barriers between man and man. In every man we mourn a brother; our tears belong to every sister. Here we call not to remembrance the sins of the erring; for we know that we are all sinners before God, and that all, all stand in need of His unbounded mercy and forgiveness.

Since the inauguration of our house of prayer, we have frequently met together with a gladsome spirit. There are many who, if even they were now separated from us in space, would still dwell with a joyous heart on the reminiscences afforded them by the celebration

of our holy Sabbaths and Festivals within the precincts of our Synagogue. We gratefully remember the meetings which have afforded us opportunities for renewing our pledges of brotherhood towards each other, and of allegiance to the law of God, the standard of duty for the good Israelite. But not until this hour (save in one most melancholy instance, to which I need not allude) has our attention been called to the fulfilment of the duties which a Jewish congregation owes to the dead; not until this day have we passed through the portals which lead to the temple of eternity. But the Preacher saith, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, inasmuch as that is the end of all men; therefore let the living take it to heart." [3]

However more grateful the contemplation of the immense store of this world's pomp and beauty may be to our minds, the royal Solomon justly tells us, that the entrance into the house of mourning is better than the admission into the house of mundane enjoyment. And the reason of the superiority here assigned to mourning over enjoyment is made obvious to every mind: "For behold the house of mourning is the end of every man's wanderings, therefore let the living take it well to heart." He will become convinced that such sorrow is better than laughter, since the heart is thereby made better. The sight of sorrow, and the feeling of sorrow, stem the tide of wantonness and pride, which keep our better parts captive; and more instructive is the contemplation of the dead in their awful repose than

[3] Ecclesiastes vii. 2.

the perception of all the glories with which life abounds.

May this moment of serious contemplation of our ultimate gathering-place leave a lasting remembrance on all our hearts; may it accompany us through the turmoil of life's busy scene; may it ever present to our mental eye the goal where our course must terminate; may it suppress in our hearts the outcries of ambition, and the whisperings of envy; may it tend to remove from our minds the injurious imagination of our superiority in purity and in worth above our fellows; may it, above all things, sustain us in the hour of trouble, by directing our thoughts to the place where all cares are hushed, where all vexations cease, and where we shall rejoin the beloved ones whom we long to meet again. And may this solemn hour and this holy occupation assure us of the unerring promise of our blessed faith, that we shall be received again into the presence of our Maker and our Redeemer, by whom was marked out, in wisdom and in love, the manner of our entrance into life, of our progress through life amidst all its windings, as well as the road we should take, so that we might be conducted to the throne of His mercy and goodness. Thus shall the due consideration of the office which we this day perform, stimulate us to the worthy fulfilment of our task during our mortal existence, prepare us, as our sages express it, in this porch for our entrance into the inner courts of the palace of God, and enable us at the end of our struggle to exclaim אהי דבריך מות אהי קטבך שאול "Where are thy plagues, O Death? Where is thy destruction, O Grave?"[4]

[4] Hosea xiii. 14.

# XVII.

## ON THE FESTIVAL OF PURIM.

*Preached on Sabbath* (13*th Adar*, 5608), *March* 18, 1848.

Job. xxxviii. 11.

עד פה תבוא ולא תוסיף ופא ישית בגאון גליך

"Thus far shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

No passage in the volume of Scripture has excited more universal admiration, or has been brought into more frequent use, than the sublime verse which constitutes our present text. Before we proceed to apply it to the remarkable events connected with the rise of the institution of Purim (which Festival forms the subject of the present discourse), let us give a few moments' attention, my hearers, to the particular circumstances, under which the passage just quoted was first pronounced.

The bodily afflictions under which the patriarch Job has long been suffering are about to terminate, and with them the sophistic and tantalizing speeches, with which he has been so mercilessly persecuted by the loquacious persons who style themselves his *friends*. Eliphaz, the greatest of the tormentors, after accusing the pious sufferer of nearly every sin

that the imagination can picture, closes, with the twenty-second chapter of the book his common-place exhortations, without contributing in the smallest degree, to the solution of the important problem, why Job has been afflicted. With the exception of a few truisms advanced by Bildad, the Shuhite, but which are wholly inapplicable to the subject in debate, the nine succeeding chapters are devoted to the self-justification, upon which Job enters, against the unfounded charges of his three friends. At the thirty-second chapter a new speaker is introduced, in the person of Elihu, the son of Barachel, who has hitherto been merely a listener to the arguments advanced on both sides. With many laboured professions of modesty, and of submission to the wisdom and experience of others, he steps into the arena, and undertakes to settle the matter in dispute. He delivers a highly rhetorical address, and after giving the rein to his enthusiasm, which carries him over a space that occupies no less than one hundred and fifty-nine verses, he concludes by leaving the question, for all practical purposes, precisely where he found it. At the thirty-eighth chapter, the voice of the Almighty is heard out of the whirlwind; and then, the several false and opposing notions, in which men are prone to indulge—that the afflictions which befal humanity are to be considered invariably as divine punishments inflicted upon the sufferers for some especial sins which they have committed; that the events which happen in the world are left to chance, because Providence does not condescend to regulate and control them; and that virtue is without a patron, and vice without an avenger; are completely and triumphantly

refuted. In the sublime address which the poet represents the Almighty as delivering, it is authoritatively declared that the power of the Lord is not restricted to any limits, and that all things, whether of mind or matter, are as much under the control of a gracious and superintending Providence, and are as fully subjected to the Lord's will, as the mighty ocean was when He created it, and when He confined it within certain boundaries, which He forbade it to pass. Most beautifully is this important doctrine set forth in a list of interrogatories, commencing at the fourth verse of the chapter of our text: "Answer thou Me. Where wast thou when I founded the earth? Declare if thou canst understand its formation? Who fixed its measurement—since thou wouldest know—or, who stretched the line upon it? Upon what are its foundations sunk, or who laid its key-stone when the morning stars sang together, and all the children of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea within doors, when its rushes from the womb would have overflowed;[1] when I made the cloud its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling-band; and when I pronounced My decree concerning it, and set limits and doors; and when I said, thus far shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?"

This magnificent passage may be likewise applied, with perfect ease and propriety, to the several occurrences which take place in the moral universe, where divine Providence is constantly exerting a sensible influence. As the Almighty permits the tide

[1] See Mason Good's Translation.

to ebb and flow agreeably to the laws of physical nature, and yet, in the exercise of His supreme wisdom, accurately defines the limits beyond which it shall neither advance nor recede; so in conformity with moral nature, He suffers mankind to think and to act; but He never allows human thought or action to outstep the boundaries, at which He has determined that their course shall be stayed. Whenever the torrent of passion or of vice would hurry us beyond the prescribed bourns, the hand of the Omnipotent is immediately stretched forth to arrest the destructive current in its course, and to divert it to a different channel, so that whilst the wicked man is disappointed of the accomplishment of his purposes, his very acts, which were intended for evil, are made to contribute to the general good.

We learn then, from the text before us, that the world is not without a Providence, that virtue is not without a patron, and that vice is not permitted to run riot, but is subjected to the control of the Omnipotent One who, at the fitting time, arrests it in its headlong career, exclaiming, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no further." The means by which the Lord is pleased to give effect to the declaration embodied in the text are various, and correspondent to His infallible wisdom and infinite power. When Pharaoh and his host presumed to measure their strength with God, and to oppose the fulfilment of the covenant which had been made with Abraham, and with his seed after him,[2] the raging floods were appointed by the Almighty as His ministers for saving Israel,

[2] Genesis xvii. 19.

and for punishing their heartless persecutors. Again, at a later period of Jewish history, when the immense host of the Assyrians lay encamped under the walls of Jerusalem, awaiting the approach of the dawn to assault the city, and to massacre its unoffending inhabitants, the messenger selected by divine Providence to shield the race of Abraham, was a pestilential vapour, which stilled in death the barbarian invaders; and when Antiochus Epiphanes waged a war of extermination against the Jews and their creed, the Lord defeated the purposes of the tyrant, and saved the remnant of His people, by means of the exalted patriotism and the undaunted valour of Judas, the Maccabee.

In each of the instances above-mentioned, physical agencies were employed; but the Almighty is not limited in the operations of His power, nor is He deficient of instruments to accomplish His will. The designs of the Deity are more frequently effected by moral means. The monitor placed within us by God, and which we call Conscience, is often made instrumental in destroying in the bud wicked devices, which no human enactments can prevent from ripening into action. The laws framed by a mortal legislator, how wise soever they be, are valuable only in as far as they tend to regulate the outward actions of mankind; yet God, whose knowledge is not bounded by what is visible or expressed, but extends likewise to what is unseen and undeclared, makes His moral law so to operate in the secret folds of the heart, as either to stifle sin at its birth, or to make it subservient to His wise and gracious purposes. "The wrath of man shall praise Thee," saith the

Psalmist, "the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." [3]

But if Conscience, God's chief moral agent, should fail to operate on the sinner, because of his long indulgence in vice, and of the hardness of his heart, still the Lord is all-sufficient: for by means of His Omniscience, He permits events which lie far beyond the pale of human calculation, to combine, to adjust themselves, and to work in unison, so that they may ultimately promote the ends of His gracious Providence, that they may serve to succour the oppressed, and to bring to condign punishment the oppressor. Now, in no instance is this great moral truth more strikingly illustrated, than in the historical details of the institution of Purim.

The period at which the events recorded in the Book of Esther are fixed, is, according to many learned and trustworthy critics, [4] in the reign of Xerxes, i.e., about 480 years before the vulgar era, and nearly forty-five years after the issuing of the famous edict of Cyrus, of Persia, in favour of the captive Jews in his

[3] Psalm lxxvi. 10.

[4] Including Scaliger, Jahn, Eichhorn, Carpzov, Bertholdt, and Gesenius. Dr. Munk observes, "The King under whom this event [recorded in the Book of Esther] took place, is commonly called *Ahasvéros* or *Assuéros:* but the Hebrew consonants of which the name is composed, having no regard to the vowels assigned to them, may be pronounced *Achscherch* or *Kschersch*, of which name the Greeks have made *Xerxes*, by joining a termination. To this resemblance of names, may be added several characteristic features, by which we are enabled to recognise in *Xerxes* the Ahasuerus of the Bible (Palestine 468, b.)" De Wette appears to dissent *in toto* from the opinion that Xerxes and Ahasuerus are one and the same personage. (Vide Critical and Historical Introduction to the Canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament, chap. ix.)

dominions. This criticism is at variance with the views entertained by the old commentators, and by all early historians, who consider Ahasuerus to be either Darius Hystaspes, successor to Cyrus, or Artaxerxes Longimanus. But without referring to dates, which confound both hypotheses, the אחשורוש of Scripture is presented to us in a very different light from that in which history portrays the characters of Darius and Artaxerxes. On the other hand, the conduct of Ahasuerus agrees exactly, as Dr. Milman remarks, "with the character of that Xerxes who commanded the sea to be scourged, because it broke down his bridge over the Hellespont; beheaded the engineers because their work was swept away by a storm; wantonly, and before the eyes of the father, put to death the sons of his oldest friend Pythias, who had contributed most splendidly to his armament; misused the body of the brave Leonidas; and after his defeat, like another Sardanapalus, gave himself up to such voluptuousness, as to issue an edict offering a reward to the inventor of a new pleasure."[5]

The Jews, scattered over the dominions of Ahasuerus, were the remnants of the Babylonian captivity. A comparatively small number of Jews returned with Zerubbabel and Joshua; and the second migration under Ezra, did not take place until the seventh year of Artaxerxes, the successor of Ahasuerus. Notwithstanding the edict which Cyrus had issued nearly half a century before, the Hebrews who had not yet been enabled to migrate to Judæa were, on the accession of Ahasuerus, again in a state of capti-

[5] Milman's History of the Jews, vol. ii.

vity, and could oppose but a feeble resistance to the machinations of the cruel and revengeful Haman. The readiness with which the capricious monarch enters into the scheme of his wicked minister, gives it every probability of success; and the poor Israelites, who, during a dreary and protracted captivity, had fortified their hearts by the scriptural promise that God would never abandon His people, even though they should be in the land of their enemies,[6] at length lost courage and hope, when they beheld the fearful preparations that were being made for the extermination of their race.

Mordecai, however, does not abandon his faith in God; but regarding Esther as the agent selected by divine Providence to save her fellow believers, he goes daily to the palace gate in the city of Susa, to urge her to exert her influence on behalf of her people. Disappointed at the conduct of the Queen, who at first appears indisposed to incur the risk to which the course recommended by her foster-father would expose her, Mordecai still maintains his trust in the Almighty, and boldly declares to Esther כי אם החרש תחרישי בעת הזאת רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר "if at this trying time thou shouldst persevere in keeping silence, help and deliverance will surely come to the Jews from another quarter."[7]

The old man said well, for he spoke in the fulness of his confidence in the Guardian of Israel. But whence should help come? The Jews had no Moses to give counsel, no Joshua, nor Gideon, nor Jonathan, to strike a blow in their defence: and if even a leader were to offer himself, how could a body

[6] See Leviticus xxvi. 40. [7] Esther iv. 14.

of captives, broken, dispirited, and scattered over the surface of a vast empire, assemble at any given point an army capable of resisting the immense physical resources which would be employed against them? To all but Mordecai the condition of the Jews seemed hopeless; and hopeless it would have been, if the teachings of Scripture had not been made manifest, that the Lord operates salvation by moral as well as by material strength. In His inscrutable wisdom the Almighty had permitted the wicked purposes of Haman to advance to a certain stage of development, and far enough to lead him who devised them to suppose that they might be carried into effect. The decree was published: the king had shewn no disposition to mitigate its severity, and nothing favorable was to be expected from the force of public opinion. On the contrary, it was much to be feared that the cruel populace would be but too eager to imbrue their hands in the blood of the Jews, seeing that the effects of the devoted victims were to fall by right to the hand that destroyed them.

The month of Adar has begun—the fatal fourteenth day is at hand—and the malignant Haman counts the hours that must pass before he can sacrifice many thousands of innocent beings to his wounded pride. But divine Providence, which holds the balance of all things and controls every occurrence, has long provided in secret *moral forces* to work against these wicked devices. It never occurred to Haman, that at the last hour the king might repent of the rash edict to which the royal signet had been affixed; it never occurred to him that the poor and outcast Mordecai might at one time have saved the

king's life, and that this loyal act might have been chronicled in the archives of the state; or that the Queen, whose favor to him was life, was a member of that much despised creed, the adherents of which he had resolved to exterminate. These events are not to be regarded, my hearers, in the light of accidents, but as moral means which the Lord had preserved in order to defeat wickedness and to protect innocence. With these moral forces the Almighty now steps forth, arrests the course of pride, and defeats crime when it is in the full anticipation of success; and as He laid His injunction upon the raging ocean when His divine word called it out of chaos, so does He now arrest Haman in the frenzy of his career, saying, in the words of the text, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

I need not enter further into the details of the history of Purim, which has been so often told; but I desire to address a few words to you, my hearers, on the propriety of continuing to observe, in a becoming manner, the anniversary of a festival which has been uninterruptedly commemorated by every Jewish congregation for more than 2300 years.

I am well aware that a prejudice exists in the minds of some persons, and amongst the number there may be some of my own congregants, against the religious celebration of Purim. For this prejudice two reasons are assigned: first, that the observance of Purim tends to perpetuate the remembrance of former wrongs, which we ought in charity to discharge from our minds, and leads us to enjoy a kind of annual triumph over a fallen enemy, who

expiated his crimes by an ignominious death; and secondly, that the Festival is not enjoined on prophetical authority, but is to be considered as a mere traditionary institution.

In reply to the first objection it is meet to observe, that if the commemoration of Purim had really the object which prejudice assigns to it, the Jewish people, on the grounds of charity, which is the basis of their religion, would certainly not have permitted the observance of the Festival to be continued. It is not surprising, however, that the institution should be regarded by some, merely in the light of a triumph over a designing enemy, when attention is directed to the spirit in which the Purim was kept in the middle ages, and to the imprecations which found their way into the liturgies for that day. But due allowance ought to be made for the excited feelings of a race galled by persecution: and whoever calls to mind the barbarity and the fiendish cruelty which the Jews experienced at the hands of their fellowmen in the middle centuries, and especially during the period of the crusades, will scarcely feel astonished that when the persecuted Hebrews commemorated in Purim a former deliverance, they should have invoked the divine vengeance on the merciless tyrants and tormentors, of whom Haman seemed to them a type. This, however, was purely accidental. The commemoration of Purim has a lofty and pious object; it is intended to perpetuate in Israel from generation to generation, the great truths of Scripture, so forcibly illustrated in the book of Esther, that the especial providence of God hovers about the remnant of the house of Jacob, and that the Almighty

is faithful to the covenant which He made with our progenitors, that He would never abandon us utterly, nor suffer our religious identity to become extinct.

In endeavouring to meet the second objection, that Purim is not commanded to us by any of the Prophets, but is an ordinance of uninspired men, I am free to admit, my hearers, that in the days of Mordecai and Esther, no authority existed equal to that of Moses or the Prophets, and that an institution therefore which took its rise in those days, ought not to be considered as possessing the same binding force as the ordinances of the Sabbath, and the Festivals which are enjoined in the Pentateuch. It should not however be forgotten, that in the book of Esther we find it earnestly recommended by the heroes of the history, that the Festival of Purim should be duly celebrated by the future generations of Jews from year to year.[8]

But, granting that the Festival in its actual form *does* rest upon mere human authority, can this be alleged as a reason why it should be treated with disregard? Certainly not, my hearers; and here I do not simply speak my individual sentiment, but I echo the unanimous opinion of the founders of this Synagogue, which was plainly and unequivocally proclaimed on the first day when our Congregation started into being. It is in the highest degree erroneous to imagine that in establishing our Synagogue we had determined to abolish, or to treat with disregard, old customs and institutions merely because they were rabbinical. Far different was, and I will add *is*, our

[8] See Esther ix. 27, 28.

purpose. We were desirous to retain every existing observance that did not stand in contradiction to the written word of God, that did not countenance superstition, or detract from the dignity and the earnestness of public devotion. We therefore very properly retained the Festivals of חנוכה (Dedication) and פורים (Purim), because we recognised in these ordinances historical associations, with which Jews of every age should identify themselves; but we as properly excluded from the liturgy for those two Festivals the ברכה (blessing), which in defiance of reason and truth, would represent the lighting of the lights on חנוכה, and the reading of the book of Esther on פורים, as the direct commandments of the Almighty. With this modification—involving beyond doubt a great principle for which we shall always feel it a sacred duty to contend—we have preserved the Festival of Purim; not because it *is* or it *is not* a rabbinical ordination, but because it enables us to commemorate an event, which especially marks the Providence of God, manifested to our fathers and to the faith which we venerate. I confidently trust, my hearers, that as often as the fourteenth day of Adar comes round, so often Purim will be inaugurated by us as a Congregation with a solemn thanksgiving: and whilst we shall thus manifest our earnest desire to identify ourselves with the past and the future history of our race, we shall also prove that it is our sincere wish as a body to unite with our brethren of other Synagogues in the observance of every ordinance that does not negative the plain and literal sense of the great text-book of Judaism—the Law of Moses.

# XVIII.

## KING JOSIAH'S PASSOVER.

*Preached on the First Day of Passover*, 5607, (*April* 1, 1847.)

II KINGS, xxiii. 21, 22.

ויצו המלך את כל העם לאמר עשו פסח ליי אלהיכם ככתוב
על ספר הברית הזה : כי לא נעשה כפסח הזה מימי השפטים
אשר שפטו את ישראל וכל ימי מלכי ישראל ומלכי יהודה :

"And the king charged all the people, saying, Consecrate the Passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of this Covenant. For never was there a Passover observed like unto this, from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah."

BRETHREN, the portals of the Synagogue are thrown open this day to receive us into the presence of our gracious and loving Father; and the Festival which we are met here to solemnize is, not only in a ritual point of view, but also in reference to its great moral and spiritual influences, one of the most important in the Jewish calendar. פסח הוא ליי "It is the Lord's Passover." What pious sentiments, what exalted conceptions, what cheering associations does the

return of this hallowed Festival awaken in every true Jewish heart! Nearly two and thirty centuries have passed away since the renowned Hebrew leader and legislator was divinely charged to call this institution into existence; and wondrous to relate, it has survived the long succession of revolutions to which mankind and their ideas and their ordinances have been subjected; and it has withstood what no *human* ordinance could have braved—the destructive and almost irresistible shock of time. To-day, brethren, history takes us, as it were, by the hand, and conducts our steps over a regularly ascending chronological line; and at what point soever we halt in our ascent, from the present year to the era of Moses, we are sure to light upon proofs, strong and conclusive, of the almost uninterrupted annual solemnization of the Passover. As the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, which preceded the Israelites on their march, were obvious and unmistakeable evidences of the especial Providence that watched over the destinies of the Abrahamic family, so for more than three thousand years, the periodical celebration of the Passover by the whole house of Israel on the fifteenth day of the month of Abib, may be regarded as a visible manifestation of the power and the glory of God, and as a testimony too full and complete for any unprejudiced mind to resist, of the divine inspiration of the Hebrew Scriptures. But what gives to this historical fact its crowning point of interest, and invests it with the character of a standing miracle is, that whilst the recollection of every other occurrence of remote antiquity is merely preserved by some monument, or at most, by some local feature

in the country where it took place—the events of the Passover are to this day attested by living witnesses, whose religious rites and observances, aye, and the very language in which their prayers and thanksgivings are uttered, are similar to those which obtained amongst the Hebrews on the wondrous night when the first פסח was inaugurated, and on the morrow (of which this day is the anniversary), when the Israelites shook off the dust of the Capital of the Pharaohs, and commenced their ever memorable march for Succoth.

Yes, my hearers, at a distance of more than thirty-two centuries, a huge pyramid of time, if I might so speak, beneath which lies buried every human vestige of nations, less, far less ancient than the stock of Abraham, we of the house of Israel are in being. We have survived the most intense persecutions, we have passed through the severest ordeal, by which any community of men has been, or in all probability ever will be tried; and this day we are met in every part of the globe where a Jewish congregation can be formed, to keep the Lord's Passover, and through that observance to vindicate our claim to the distinguished title which the Lord has been pleased to confer upon our race; אתם עדי נאם יי "You are my witnesses, saith the Eternal."[1]

The annual celebration of the Passover, brethren, is a matter of the highest importance, not to the Jew only, but to every one who builds his hopes on the divine inspiration of the Bible. It is a great fact which, whilst it confounds the sophist and the sceptic,

[1] Isaiah xliii. 10.

confirms the faith of the pious believer. Every Jew assembled this day in our several Synagogues, bears a strong and unimpeachable testimony to the marvellous redemption which was wrought for his ancestors in Egypt. When we contemplate the present scene—a whole congregation of the house of Jacob, taking part in the solemnization of the earliest rite enjoined by Moses; and when we unclasp our Bible, and discover the promises which God has there registered, that no revolutions of empires and no vicissitudes of fortune shall be suffered to impair our distinctive religious identity, we can hardly refrain from echoing the passage of the holy Psalmist, "Thy word, O Lord! endureth for ever; Thy truth extendeth throughout all generations." [2]

But, my hearers, the worship of the Synagogue, in which we have this day joined, how important soever it be in a ritual point of view, cannot of itself denote the full and generous spirit of the Passover, since this institution is intimately associated with grand and holy purposes, which tower high above all ceremonial ordinances. The return of our great Festival should awaken the Jew to a sense of the position which he holds in the moral and intellectual world, to his important vocation, and to his great destiny. It should arouse us from our torpor, induce us to shake off our indifference, and emancipate our minds from all sentiments of a contracted and superstitious character, and it should also attach us more and more to the pure principles of our ancient faith.

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[2] Psalms cxix. 89, 90.

Such were the notions of the Passover entertained by the pious and enlightened monarch mentioned in our text, when he consulted the book of Moses, in order that he might learn from its pages how the Festival should be solemnized.

Josiah strictly observed the Paschal ceremonies enjoined in the Pentateuch; but he did not suppose the requirements of the sacred institution to end here. He perceived from the expressive words of Moses, that the Passover, properly considered, involves great moral principles and spiritual blessings; and it was in reference to these sentiments of inward religion, that the solemnization of the Festival in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, was so remarkably distinguished from many previous annual celebrations of the מועד: "There was no such Passover holden," says the sacred narrative, "since the days of the Judges." The learned Calmet observes, "that which distinguished this Passover from all the former was, the great liberality of Josiah, who distributed to his people a larger number of victims than either David or Solomon had done." But we Jews construe the passage differently; for as the Bible attaches but a secondary importance to sacrificial rites, when compared with spiritual worship, we are disposed to regard the distinguishing feature of Josiah's Passover as consisting in this: that, whilst the good monarch strictly adhered to all the ceremonials which the Pentateuch prescribes, he kept the Festival on purer principles than many of his predecessors, and that he caused it to be consecrated in the fulness of the spirit of Judaism, which requires of its disciples, above every thing else, a holy life. קדשים תהיו כי קדוש אני יי אלהיכם

"Ye shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy."[3]

Now as I would have you, my hearers, draw from the institution of the Passover the same practical lessons as the pious Josiah, let me ask your attention whilst I briefly consider the conduct which the return of the Festival prompted the monarch of Judah to pursue. The original copy of the Pentateuch, which Moses had commanded to be placed in the ark for a witness, having been read before Josiah, he immediately assembled about him the chief of the priests and public teachers, to take measures for removing the abuses and superstitions which neglect had suffered to creep into the pure Jewish system; for whilst these evils existed, the good monarch felt that the Passover could not be solemnized in its true spirit. Idolatry was thus at once banished from the Holy Land; the sanguinary rites of Moloch were strictly prohibited; the high places consecrated by Solomon,

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[3] Lev. xix. 2. On the passage of the text כי לא נעשה בפסח הזה וכו׳ R. David Kimchi makes the following comment: שהיו כל ישראל בלב אחד לעבוד את יי "All Israel was devoted with one heart to the service of God." Rashi has also an explanation of this text, which is well worthy of consideration: לא נעשה כפסח הזה ליי בירושלים אבל משמלכו מלכי ישראל ומלכי יהודה לא עשו פסח כל ישראל בירושלים לפי שנחלקה המלכות לשנים מירבעם, והיו הולכים לענל שבבית־אל ובדן עד עכשיו שנלו עשרת השבטים והחזירם ירמיהו ומלך עליהם יאשיהו ובאו כלם לירושלים. "'There had not been celebrated such a Passover unto God in Jerusalem:' for during the time when there were Kings over Israel and Kings over Judah, *all* the Jews did not come to Jerusalem to solemnize the Passover, the kingdom having been rent in twain by Jeroboam: many went to the Calf at Bethel and to the Idol at Dan. But the ten tribes having been banished, Jeremiah brought back the minds of the people over whom Josiah reigned, so that now *all* repaired to Jerusalem."

at the close of his reign, to the Deities of his heathen wives, and the altar raised by Jeroboam at Bethel, were destroyed, and ashes and the bones of the dead were scattered there, in order to prevent the Jews from assembling again at those places for the purpose of divine worship.

The first lesson we gather, therefore, from Josiah's Passover is, that we should employ every means in our power to remove from amongst us ignorance and superstition, the great enemies of our common faith, and the most serious obstacles to our moral and social advancement. We should consider that we have done not only little, but absolutely nothing, so long as ignorance is permitted to prevail, and to prove a stumbling block to the growing youth of our humbler classes. Upon this portion of the heritage of Jacob we ought not to look with indifference, whilst they are setting up high places for superstition, instead of bringing their hearts and their minds to the altar of genuine religion. We should not, if it be in our power to prevent it, leave them plunged in the un-Jewish belief, that religion is letter and not spirit; nor allow them to confound the outward form with the internal spirit. But we ought to emulate the conduct of Josiah, by calling around us fit teachers, and by co-operating with them, however we may differ from them in minor considerations, to banish ignorance and superstition from Israel. Well might the monarch of Judah recognize this as the primary duty of the Passover, since the exodus from Egypt was mainly instrumental in overthrowing the indecency and the blighting influence of superstition, in propounding the one great principle of sub-

lime simplicity, the absolute unity of God—and in making it the common property of mankind.

The second lesson suggested to us by Josiah's Passover is, that we should cling with devotion to our holy faith, and take a lively interest in every attempt that is made to improve and to spiritualize our system of Divine worship. At the period when Josiah succeeded to the throne of Judah, the prophetic voice was unheeded, the priesthood was corrupt, and the gains of the pontifical office, and not its awfully responsible duties, were alone considered. The once magnificent Temple was crumbling to decay, its solemn rites were neglected or at most performed in an unhallowed spirit, and the altar at whose steps Solomon and the tens of thousands of Israel had knelt in humble prayer and supplication, was almost deserted. The Jews, from whose lips knowledge and instruction were to have been conveyed to the surrounding nations, had fearfully degenerated, and the race advancing to manhood and womanhood, failing parental example to incline their hearts to the One and Only God, and parental precept to bring them to understand and to keep His commandments, had either gone over to the lewd worship of Baal, or had sunk into the abyss of infidelity.

At this mournful age in Jewish history, when there remained of the practice of Mosaism only a few of its forms, King Josiah applied himself to the study of the pure doctrines of the Bible. Let us consult the third verse of the chapter of our text, in order to ascertain the influence which the study of the Pentateuch produced on this monarch. "Then the King stood at his place, and there he made a covenant

before the Lord to walk after the ways of the Lord, and to keep His commandments, His statutes and His judgments, with all his heart and all his soul, and to perform the words of the covenant, as they are written in this book."

God grant, my hearers, that the return of the Passover may move every one of us to enter into the same hallowed covenant. Let us render thanks to our Almighty Father, that we have no longer to contend against idolatry; for wherever the humanizing influence of letters is felt, there has the Judaic precept taken deep root: "Thou shalt have no other Divinity besides the Eternal." But unhappily, much indifference still prevails amongst us concerning religion. I have often had occasion to remark, that the greatness conferred on the race of Israel from the day when they were emancipated from Egypt, did not consist in their numerical strength, for even in the palmy days of their empire, they were perhaps the fewest of all nations of equal standing. Nor was their greatness to appear in the victories which should crown their arms, or in the influence that they might have over the political relations of neighbouring states. The glory of Israel, dear brethren, was to consist in their moral power, in the intellectual position which they took in the infancy, as it were, of the world, and which they were to occupy and to continue to make manifest, until the time should arrive for the fulfilment of the prophecy: כי אז אהפך אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרא כלם בשם יי לעבדו שכם אחד "For then will I turn the people to a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, and serve Him

with one accord."[4] If then the Hebrews are enabled to point to any monuments of their former and present moral greatness, these must be sought in the progress which we have made as a "kingdom of priests," and not only in what we have achieved for ourselves and our race, but also in what we have been permitted to teach to every civilized people of the globe. Never then let us be unmindful, that our glory lies in the performance of our divine commission; for He who emancipated us on the day which we are now commemorating, sent us forth to teach, that God is ONE, that the soul is immaterial and imperishable, and that man is accountable to his Maker for all his actions. Large has been our seminary, innumerable have been our our disciples. Wherever the Lord is worshipped in spirit, wherever human life is held sacred, filial love is manifested, or the marriage vow is faithfully kept, wherever truth, virtue, and human love prevail, there has Jewish influence been felt, there is a monument raised to the emancipated from Egypt. We ought not to esteem it a light thing, brethren, to be of the race "of a kingdom of priests;" but we should at the same time be deeply impressed with this truth, that in proportion to the great purposes which we are appointed to fill, and in proportion to what is expected of us as teachers, are the shame and disgrace that must needs light upon us, if we evince an apathy for those blessings and spiritual advantages which, through our practice, we were to confer upon all the families of the earth.

If I bring these reflections now to your minds, my hearers, it is because our Festival and our text most

[4] Zeph. iii, 9.

forcibly suggest them. May the lesson which we gather from the Scripture record not be lost upon us; but may it induce us to remember our departure from Egypt, and move us to open the book of the Covenant in the same spirit, and for the same objects as the good king Josiah! At no period of our history did we ever stand in greater need of diligently consulting, and conscientiously practising the words of this Covenant than at the present time. We are different, brethren, from our grandfathers, and our great grandfathers, in many of our ideas and pursuits. We have not now to lament, like those who preceded us by some half a century, that the energies of the Jew are totally cramped, and that every honorable field is closed against his varied talents and capacities. Many galling and narrow-minded enactments have been sacrificed at the bidding of charity and human love, and a promise of still greater concessions is held forth by the growing liberality of the age. Nor have the Jews been slow to take advantage of this beneficial change; but we have availed ourselves of the progress of enlightened legislation, to cultivate highly the minds of our children, and to fit them for the discharge of every honorable trust that may be confided to them by their fellow citizens. But an important question now arises, and we must meet it fully: Do we wish them to remain Jews? If so, why do we bestow so little care upon their religious education? In God's name, brethren, give your children the best scholastic and scientific education that your means can afford; but if their religious instruction keep not pace with it, you sin most grievously against your offspring. Improved educa-

tion will make them think maturely, reason and compare, not with regard to secular things only, but also concerning whatever affects their eternal hopes. Now you must be prepared to admit, my hearers, that the hearts of such children will not, cannot, be held firm to a faith of which they know the forms only. Well instructed youths will demand something spiritual, something moral, noble, and elevating: in other words, they will demand the pure principles of "the book of the Covenant" developed in the lives and in the actions of you, parents, if you desire to keep them within the ranks of Judaism, and do not wish them to degenerate into apostasy or infidelity.

I feel all the solemnity of what I am uttering, when I deliberately declare to you, brethren, that the Judaism of the whole generation must depend upon the example which you place before your children. Upon you it depends, whether they shall draw near to God in communion from Sabbath to Sabbath, or whether they shall live as if there were no revelation, no law, no altar. Upon you it depends whether they shall be Jews in spirit like Josiah, or no Jews at all. For let it not be forgotten, that an educated race will not, like their ancestors who lived in an age of persecution, when the Jew sought concealment and feared to come forth in open day, be kept firm to their faith by the frail thread of mere form, or by adhering to an observance instituted by such a sage or such a Rabbin. Your children must find in your practices as well as your precepts, a religion that will make its way to the heart, and satisfy the cravings of the spirit, or, I repeat, they will cease to be a portion of the heritage of Jacob,

and the responsibility will lie at your own doors. Once more then, my brethren, remember this festival—remember the conduct of the pious Josiah; and, let us all pray to our Heavenly Father, so to dispose our hearts towards Him, that we may imitate the conduct of the king of Judah, who with the sacred volume of the Pentateuch before him "made a Covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart, and all his soul, to perform the words of the Covenant which are written in this book:"[5] and let us further pray, that what is recorded of the people whom Josiah assembled, may be equally applied to our congregation; ויעמד כל העם בברית "And all the people stood to the Covenant."[6]

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[5] 2 Kings, xxiii. 3. [6] Ibid.

# XIX.

## ON THE PASSOVER.

*Preached on the First Day of the Festival of Passover*, 5608, (*April* 18, 1848)

Exodus xiii. 3.

ויאמר משה אל העם זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים מבית עבדים

"And Moses said unto the people, Remember well this day, on which ye came forth from Egypt, from the house of servitude."

Brethren, the same wondrous Providence of God which has decreed, that as long as the earth endures, a remnant of Israel shall be preserved, to bear their living testimony to the truths of Revelation, has also determined that the mighty deeds in which our fathers performed so conspicuous a part in the infancy of the world, shall never be obliterated from the Jewish mind; and further, that the Hebrews shall maintain a constant and uninterrupted line of connection between the present and the past. To this end, God in His infallible wisdom, was pleased to interweave with our religious system, the observance of certain ritual laws, and the solemnization of Festivals at fixed periods of the year. Hence the institution of the Passover, which is so well calculated to effectuate the purpose for which the Supreme Being

ordained its observance. In assembling in our several Synagogues to-day to observe this חג האביב or, "Festival of the Spring," we feel ourselves irresistibly carried back through the long stream of centuries, almost every year of which is visibly marked by the solemnization of the Passover, until we are thrown on the very point of time, at which Moses spake the memorable words of our text. Yes, my hearers, the day on which we are now met together — the day immediately following the night on which the emancipation of our fathers was accomplished—the very day, if not the very hour, on which the immortal legislator bids his brethren in country and in faith, "remember what a few hours have brought about"—places us, in mind at least, on the confines of Mizraim, and allows us to survey with wonder and awe, one of the greatest moral spectacles which, in the long history of the world, has ever been offered to view. We look upon a marvellous, but a most intelligible and instructive picture; we read one of the earliest lessons taught to mankind,—a lesson that has produced the greatest amount of happiness, not to Hebrews only, but to all men, our brothers and the equal children of God, in the instructing, the assisting, and the serving of whom, our Heavenly Father has given us Jews the privilege of being instrumental. Tarry, I pray you, brethren, tarry yet a little while at this sublime spectacle, animated by the Divine Spirit, and observe how the Eternal God is vindicating the inherent rights of the race stamped in His own image. Heaven's high and mighty Lord presides over this scene, and proclaims in words too plain to be misunderstood, that liberty of thought, as well

as freedom of action, is the birthright of humanity; that man's limbs are his own, which no mortal should presume to fetter; that man's conscience is his own, which no mortal should dare to invade. But there is still another feature presented to us in this lively picture, which it behoves us to note well, for without it the important moral lesson intended to be conveyed would not be complete. Like all gifts which a bounteous Providence is pleased to lavish upon man, liberty may be abused, and may be suffered to degenerate into licentiousness and anarchy, unless there be some controlling power to check our unruly desires, to keep us in subjection to constituted laws, to oblige the strong to respect the rights of the weak, and most especially, unless there be some inward monitor to impress us with the conviction, that even in cases where human laws cannot reach us, we are accountable to an eternal, omniscient, and righteous Being. Now this feature, so essential to crown the moral lesson of the Passover, stands out most prominently in the picture which we are contemplating. Moses himself points to it, towards the close of the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, as essentially connected with the Passover. When your children, in after-times, says he, shall enquire of you why you observe these ritual ordinances of the Passover; when they shall ask, מה העדת והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה יי אלהינו אתכם "What is the object of these testimonies, statutes, and rites which the Lord our God has commanded you?"[1] Then shall you tell them the history of your bondage in Egypt, and of your

[1] Deuter. vi. 20.

deliverance therefrom by the miraculous power of God; and you shall add, that the object of your emancipation was, that you might know your God, perform His will, and live in subjection to His laws: ויצונו יי לעשות את כל החקים האלה ליראה את יי אלהינו "And the Lord commanded us to observe all these rites, that they might lead us to fear the Eternal, our God."[2]

And now, brethren, that we have contemplated the scene brought back to our remembrance by the Festival of to-day, and that we have endeavoured to study the moral which this scene was intended to convey, let us return to the passage of our text, and strive as far as we are able, to bring our minds into unison with the sentiments which animated the breast of our renowned leader and law-giver, when he bade our newly emancipated ancestors זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים "to remember this day, on which they came forth from Egypt."

In the whole of the immense assembly of Hebrews encamped between Rameses and Succoth, amounting to more than two millions of souls, there is one man who so completely rivets our attention, that we cannot remove our eyes from him to regard any other object. It is the wise, the God-fearing, the patriotic Moses, enjoying the triumph, which God has permitted him to achieve for humanity. With what patience, with what holy trust has he awaited this glorious day! It is forty years and more, since he looked on the sufferings and afflictions of his enslaved brethren; and from that time the desire to emancipate them, and to give them their true position

[2] Deuter. vi. 24.

in the world of men, has never been absent from his mind. Upon him, individually, no fetters were placed; over him the cruel task-master had no sway; for he was a prince in Pharaoh's court, was regarded as the king's foster-child, and there was no office so high, no honor so great, to which his ambition might not have aspired. But selfishness forms no part of the character of a truly great man. The palace in which he dwelt would have seemed to him a prison, and the honors lavished upon him, as gall and wormwood, so long as any individual member of his race and creed should be unjustly deprived of those rights and privileges, which he alone might be permitted to enjoy. A rash and unjustifiable act, committed under circumstances of great provocation, determines his career; he is exiled from Egypt, and passes a large portion of his life near the deserts of Arabia, never abandoning the hope of his youth, and the solace of his riper years, the task of obtaining the freedom of his Hebrew brethren.

When the cup of Pharaoh's iniquity was full, and when the Lord summoned Moses to accomplish the object which he had so much at heart, the great leader and Prophet was doomed to experience many vexations and disappointments. His first mission to Pharaoh was a signal failure; and, in addition to the contempt heaped upon him by the Egyptian court, he had to support a far greater trial, that of the upbraidings and imprecations of those very Hebrews, whom he so loved, and to emancipate whom he had devoted his whole life. Twice, thrice, ten times did he fail in the accomplishment of his sacred task; but each time he re-commenced the work with increased

zeal and unabated confidence, bequeathing to us, his disciples and successors, a most instructive lesson, that we should never despair of success in a righteous cause, but that we should pursue it with a zealous and unbending spirit, convinced as we ought to be, that truth and justice must ultimately achieve a triumph over error and oppression. God Himself had promised this victory, and Moses' faith in the Divine word did not waver. On the eve of the first month, afterwards called by the Hebrews "Nissan,"[3] Moses prepares his brethren for their approaching emancipation, and ordains the institution of the Passover. He appoints these calends as the commencement of the Jewish year, from which every national event is to be dated, every Festival computed. He fixes the very night and the precise hour, when the Egyptian court shall be seized by a panic, and when the Israelites shall go forth as freemen. To this end the people are especially charged to celebrate the paschal rites "with their loins girded, their sandals on their feet, and their staves in their hands."[4]

The midnight hour is past, all the first-born of Egypt are struck down by an invisible power, and the day of the fifteenth dawns upon the myriads of Jews, halting near Succoth, after their first march

[3] The early Hebrews had no other mode of distinguishing between the months of the year than that of *first*, *second*, etc. The names by which the months are now called, "Nissan," "Iyar," etc., are of Chaldean origin, and were adopted by the Jews during the Babylonian captivity. The following, however, must be excepted, as belonging to an epoch previous to the captivity: זו אביב (Exodus xiii. 4, 1 Kings, vi. 1.) בול (1 Kings, vi. 38.) ירח האתנים (1 Kings, viii. 2.)

[4] Exodus xii. 11.

from Rameses. The silence in which the Hebrews have performed this journey, astounded at the panic of the Egyptians, and awed by the wonders of God, is now broken by their renowned leader, in the words of our text: Israelites, "remember this day, on which ye came forth from Egypt." Remember what the power of God has effected for you since midnight; remember how the stillness of that hour was disturbed, how the sleep of the oppressor was broken, how the wail of lamentation was heard, how your fetters were struck from your limbs, and how your emancipation was decreed by Pharaoh himself; and remember this, the first day of your freedom, which makes you conscious of human dignity. From this day you will think as you never thought before, influenced by the workings of a spirit which ye knew not that you possessed; from this day you will judge for yourselves, and act for yourselves; from this day you must strive after what is great, and good, and holy, and begin to accomplish objects, the magnitude of which you could not conceive, so long as slavery was branded on your brow. "Remember this day," which has not dawned for you alone, nor for the race of Hebrews who shall be born of you, but for all men, of every country and every creed, till the end of time. In this day, future generations shall recognize the charter of their liberties, the assertion of their inalienable rights; in this day all tyrants and oppressors, all those that deny to God's intelligent creatures the privilege to think and act as conscience prompts, shall read their doom. Hitherto, kings and princes, imagining themselves irresponsible to God above, and to man below, have abused their power, ruled by passion and not reason,

and become the persecutors, instead of the protectors of their subjects; and hitherto men have been governed by brute, and not moral, force. From this day, however, let it be known, that there are duties for high and low, for rich and poor, for rulers and subjects; and that for the due discharge of these moral and social obligations, all men shall be held accountable at the tribunal of God.

Moses plainly declares, in his first address to his people after their emancipation, that the remembrance of the exit from Egypt and the celebration of the Passover, are intended to promote amongst the Hebrews a life of holiness. "It shall be unto thee for a sign upon thy hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, in order that the law of the Lord may be in thy mouth."[5] In perfect consistency with these words, Moses bases every ritual ordinance and moral precept on the deliverance from Epypt. The first sacred institution to which he directs the attention of the Israelites is the Sabbath: a double portion of Manna falls on the sixth day, and the phenomenon is explained by the succeeding day being Sabbath. At this time, however, he says nothing of the coherence between the Passover and the Sabbath; but when he recapitulates the articles of the Decalogue, he points out this connection in precise terms. "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee forth from thence.....therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day."[6]

The exodus from Egypt was also the foundation of the three great Festivals. Of the Passover (פסח)

[5] Exodus xiii. 9. [6] Deut. v. 15.

nothing here needs be said, since its name indicates its object: סכות (the Feast of Tabernacles), is placed in immediate relation with the exodus from Egypt;[7] and although שבעות (the feast of weeks) does not appear, at the first glance, to have any reference to that event; yet when we refer to the law concerning the offering of the בכורים (first fruits) appointed to take place on שבעות, we discover that this Festival is also intimately connected with the exodus from Egypt.[8] The same remark applies to the solemnization of ראשי חדשים (the new moons), and to the daily and periodical sacrifices: they were all directly or indirectly connected with the emancipation from the Pharaohs, the stupendous event which was to be recalled to the Jewish mind every month, every week, every day.

Passing from ritual ordinances to ethical precepts, we perceive from the Scriptures that the Passover is made the foundation of all our moral and social duties. The Hebrews are assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai, about two months from the period of their emancipation, and the Almighty reveals Himself to His people, as the Lord God who brought them out of the land of Egypt.[9] The Decalogue is delivered; and the Israelites, unable to support the majesty of the Divine presence, entreat Moses to receive from God, on their behalf, all future commandments and ordinances.[10] The Prophet yields to the request of his brethren, and at the expiration of forty days returns to them charged with the precepts, which are

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[7] See Levit. xxiii. 43. [8] See Deut. xxvi. 5, et seq.

[9] Exodus xx. 2. [10] Ibid xx. 19. compare Deut. v. 23, et seq.

principally found in the 22nd and 23rd chapters of Exodus, and the 19th chapter of Leviticus. Moses proclaims the laws which secure the rights of labour and the rights of property, the rights of man and of woman, the rights of the poor and of the stranger, as well as the laws which define the duties of rulers and of subjects. By virtue of these enactments, the Hebrews are forbidden to oppress the weak, to injure a fellow creature in person, property, or reputation; to appropriate to themselves the goods of another which they might accidentally find; to revenge or to bear a grudge: but they are enjoined to act charitably, justly, and humanely, and to judge mankind in righteousness: and the inspired legislator frequently impresses on the minds of his hearers, that the foundation of the sublime ethical code which he is charged to deliver to them, is the event of the exodus from Egypt. [11]

And let it not be supposed by those who are not of our faith, that the operation of the benevolent laws, so solemnly promulgated by the prophetic Moses, was to be confined by the Jews to their fellow believers. Far from it; the duties of charity and love were enjoined to be practised universally. "If a stranger dwell with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. That stranger that dwells with you, shall be unto you as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." [12]

We learn then, dear brethren, that when Moses

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[11] See Exod. xxii. 20. xxiii. 9. Levit. xix. 34.

[12] Levit. xix. 33, 34.

addressed our ancestors in the words of the text, he had in view the happiness, not of the Israelites only, but of all future generations of mankind. To him, therefore, the Passover was a noble and generous institution. He regarded it not merely in relation to its ceremonials, nor simply in reference to the particular generation of men whom it had set free; but as the means of accomplishing universal good, and of rendering blessed "all the families of the earth."

Such were the sentiments which rejoiced the heart and exalted the mind of Moses, when on the first day of the Passover he surveyed the vast multitude of captives set free by the wonder-working hand of the Lord. "Remember this day," said the great moral hero, who in the fulness of his prophetic spirit saw, in the distance, great events which could not be wholly accomplished within the short span of his own life. And, brethren, how forcibly do his words, "remember this day," come home to us at a time like the present, when so many of the blessings which the Divine legislator saw in prospect for humanity, as the ultimate consequences of the emancipation of the Israelites from Egypt, have been realized! Standing as we now do, at a distance of more than thirty centuries from the generation of Moses, but as much identified with the Hebrews of that day as if they had been our grandfathers, we may contemplate with delight, with human affection, and above all with pious thankfulness, what the emancipation from Egypt has wrought, and what the race which that wondrous event ordained "a kingdom of priests," has been permitted to accomplish for mankind. Can

we think of all this, and yet be heedless of the words of Moses, "Remember the Passover"? No, brethren; we remember it this day with deep-felt gratitude to our Almighty Father, when we look abroad and see all nations recognizing the God that brought our ancestors out of Egypt; we remember it when we see all civilized people bending reverently before the Divine authority of the Mosaic law, and acting in accordance with its hallowed principles; we remember it when we behold the large body of our fellow-creatures free in body and in mind; and when we see human rights acknowledged, and the duties of man faithfully discharged. We remember it, especially, when we think of England, our beloved country, great, glorious, and powerful within, and honoured and respected without; and when we consider that all the power which she wields, all the confidence which she inspires, and the respect which she so justly commands, are to be attributed to the fact of her being identified, to a very considerable extent, with the sublime doctrines that date from the first celebration of the Festival, on the anniversary of which we are now assembled. We also remember it, my hearers, when we compare this country with many continental states,[13] when we note how the blessing of liberty is abused abroad, whilst it is gratefully cherished and rationally enjoyed at home, because the principle taught to the early Jews on their emancipation from Egypt—that freedom consists with the love and fear of God, with loyalty to rulers, with respect to magistrates, and with a scrupulous

[13] This sermon was preached in the spring of 1848, when Continental Europe was convulsed by revolution and anarchy.

regard for the rights and properties of all citizens—is in our country, God be praised, well understood and fully recognised.

It were much to be wished, that the Passover had been duly remembered by non-Israelites also, and that the claims of the Hebrews, whose ancestors instructed the world how to obtain and enjoy freedom, had been taken into account, in after times, by the several nations and states. If that Festival had been remembered with gratitude, we should now be spared the pain of perusing many a page in the annals of history stained with persecution and blood; if it had been remembered, the anomalous spectacle would not to-day be offered to view, of the descendants of that race which gave freedom and light to the world, soliciting for themselves the very rights and privileges, which their ancestors first inspired men to demand, and instructed them how to employ, for their own benefit and for the common weal. If the Passover had been remembered, the title of the Jewish citizen to equal immunities with his fellow-subjects would long since have been recognised and decreed, not only on the broad basis of humanity, but also on the grounds of common gratitude. However selfishness and prejudice may cloud men's minds and narrow their views, yet a little reflection would have convinced all those who have been adverse to our claims, that the event of the Passover is to be placed amongst the most powerful causes of all concessions to civil and religious liberty, and of all the social and affectionate relations which bind man to man, and constitute the happiness, the security, and the well-being of civilized states.

# XX.

## ON TRUST IN GOD.

*Preached on the last day of the Festival of Passover*, 5610, (*April* 3, 1850.)

PSALMS, CXV. 9.

ישראל בטח ביי "O ISRAEL, TRUST IN THE LORD."

BRETHREN, the seventh or last day of the Festival of Passover again summons us to the house of worship, to enter into prayerful and sacred communion with our Father in Heaven, for thus runs His divine behest: וביום הראשון מקרא קדש וביום השביעי מקרא קדש יהיה לכם "On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation unto you."[1] Although the Scriptures mark the first day and the last day of the Passover with a peculiar sanctity, by the title of מקראי קדש, still the entire Festival, "from the fourteenth day of the first month at evening, until the one and twentieth day of the month at evening,"[2] is commanded to be kept holy. Hence we assemble daily in public congregation during the paschal week; and in addition to the liturgy, which especially relates to the deliverance from Egypt, we recite a number of beautiful Psalms,

[1] Exodus xii. 16. [2] Ibid. v. 18.

so familiar to every congregant by the name of Hallel (הלל). From this collection of Psalms, which from frequent repetition, brethren, must be strongly impressed on your minds, I take the present text. It may easily be remembered by every hearer, since it consists but of three simple words. ישראל בטח ביי "O Israel, trust in the Lord."

Of the author or authors of the Psalms that form the הלל, nothing certain is known; but we can scarcely mistake the object for which they were composed. Each of the Psalms appears to owe its origin to some signal act of mercy and deliverance, which the Lord vouchsafed to extend to the children of Abraham: and so strongly is the conviction of the goodness of the Almighty impressed on the heart of the sacred poet, that he avails himself of every fitting occasion to recommend the community of Israel to place their implicit reliance in their heavenly Parent. ישראל בטח ביי עזרם ומגנם הוא "Let Israel trust in the Lord: He is their help and their shield."[3] בית אהרן בטחו ביי עזרם ומגנם הוא "Let the house of Aaron," *i. e.* the priestly family which ministers at the altar and puts up public prayers for the congregation, "trust in the Lord: He is their help and their shield."[4] יראי יי בטחו ביי עזרם ומגנם הוא "Let all God-fearing men trust in the Lord: He is their help and their shield."[5] The Psalmist does not merely exhort us to place our confidence in the Lord; but he also adduces the most cogent reasons why we should repose in Him our fullest trust; חנון יי וצדיק ואלהינו מרחם "The Lord is compassionate and

[3] Psalms cxv. 9. [4] Ibid. v. 10. [5] Ibid. v. 11.

righteous, and our God is merciful:"[6] again we are assured, that although the Lord המגביהי לשבת "is enthroned on high," המשפילי לראות בשמים ובארץ "He condescendeth to note what is passing in the heavens and on the earth," and מקימי מעפר דל מאשפת ירים אביון that "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy from the dunghill."[7] Finally, the Psalmist comes forward in his own person, as an illustration of God's gracious dealings with mankind; כי ישמע יי את קולי תחנוני: כי הטה אזנו לי "For the Lord heard my voice and my supplication: for He inclined his ear unto me."[8] דלתי לי יהושיע "I was reduced very low, and He saved me:"[9] מן המצר קראתי יה ענני במרחב יה "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and the Lord answered me with deliverance."[10] On these grounds, the poet adds, "if the struggles of death should encompass me, if the pangs of the Sheol should seize me, and if I were entangled in sorrow and trouble, I would call upon the name of the Lord."[11] On these grounds, he unhesitatingly declares, that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to rely on man: it is better to trust in the Lord than to rely on princes."[12]

I purpose, brethren, to consider the exhortation of our text: first, as it applies to the Jewish people collectively; and secondly, as it concerns every one of us in his individual capacity.

Regarded in the first point of view, I might almost rest content to illustrate the passage of the text, by the associations which the single word "Passover" is capable of suggesting: for if on the broad page of history there

[6] Psalm cxvi. 5. [7] Ibid. cxiii. 5, 6, 7. [8] Ibid. cxvi. 1, 2. [9] Ibid. ver. 6. [10] Ibid. cxviii. 5. [11] Ibid. cxvi. 3, 4. [12] Ibid. cxviii. 8, 9.

be recorded any one event which is more calculated than another to inspire the house of Israel with a firm religious trust, it is unquestionably the exodus from Egypt. In the portion of the Scripture which was read this morning, we have a remarkable instance of the influence of heavenly trust, in the conduct of Moses. The Scripture lecture opened[13] with a record of the fact, that when the Israelites quitted Rameses, they were not conducted to the promised land by the shortest and most direct road, which lay through the country of the Philistines. The reason assigned for this in the sacred narrative is all-sufficient, ולא נחם אלהים דרך ארץ פלשתים כי קרוב הוא כי אמר אלהים פן ינחם העם בראותם מלחמה ושבו מצרימה "God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest the people repent when they behold war, and they return to Egypt."[14] But it was reasonable to suppose that the experience which Moses had had of the conduct of the Egyptian court, ever ready to assent to any conditions when under the influence of imminent danger, and just as ready to recant all its promises when the danger had apparently passed away, would have induced the Hebrew leader to take every precaution for the safety of his people, if, as it was most probable, the Egyptians should after a few days recover from their panic, and make an attempt to recapture their emancipated bondmen. This, indeed, would have been the first care of any chief who was not immediately inspired of God, and who did not confidently rely on supernatural aid; and the neglect of such a precaution would have justly subjected him to

[13] Exodus xiii. 17. [14] Ibid.

the charge of deliberately sacrificing the people, whom he had induced to submit to his guidance. But Moses takes a course, which, considered apart from the spirit of inspiration with which he was filled, and the undying religious trust by which his heart was fortified, would place him amongst the greatest of visionaries. The line of march was, however, not suggested by Moses himself, but was performed under the immediate command of God. And therefore the renowned leader had the fullest reliance—that although he was charged to conduct the Hebrews into a defile,[14] with the Red Sea before them, and the Egyptians in their rear; and although he was fully aware that as far as human aid might avail, there could be no escape if the Egyptians should determine on an attack—the God of Israel, whose mandate he was obeying, was all-sufficient to extricate His people from the imminent peril to which they were exposed, and that His Almighty hand would be graciously held forth to save them.

A few days elapse, and the danger which was so much to be apprehended and guarded against actually occurs. The Israelites are overtaken by the Egyptians, who fancy themselves quite secure of their prey, and appear to ridicule Moses and Aaron for their want not only of generalship, but of common prudence, in bringing the Israelites into their present dilemma. They exclaim נבכים הם בארץ סגר עליהם המדבר "they are caught fast in the land, the wilderness closes them in."[15] In the Hebrew camp all is lamentation and dismay, and nothing but the merciful Providence of God which hovers about Moses can save him from falling a victim to the

[14] See Graves on the Pentateuch, Part i. Lecture v. [15] Exodus xiv. 3.

rage of the Israelites, who now regard him, not as their heroic deliverer, but as their base betrayer. The people derisively ask him whether there were no graves in Egypt, that he must needs bring them to the wilderness to perish; and they forcibly remind him of the obstacles which they themselves had opposed in Egypt, to his patriotic endeavours to free them from the galling yoke of Pharaoh. It is scarcely possible, my hearers, for the mind to conceive, or for the pen to describe, a scene of more moral grandeur than that which is now offered to us in the conduct of Moses. Calm and undismayed, and filled with holy trust in the God of Abraham, whose divine purposes he is executing, the hero opposes nothing but patience and forbearance to the insults heaped upon him by his ungrateful brethren. A crisis has arrived, to which the messenger of God is fully equal. But how does he meet it? By opposing force to force, or by encouraging the Hebrews to face the enemies boldly, and to strive to compensate by their vast numbers for their deficiency in military training? No, brethren! he manfully faces the crisis, and braves all danger, by his unswerving trust in Almighty God: "Fear ye not," says he, "but stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord which He will work for you this day." [16] The event fully proved how well founded was the reliance which our immortal legislator reposed in the omnipotence and the mercy of the Lord.

The lesson, brethren, which Moses has here bequeathed to us of a firm trust in God, the lesson which he had himself learned from the stupendous

[16] Exodus xiv. 13.

events of the Passover, ought never to be obliterated from the memory of Israel. If the writer of the Psalm from which our text is borrowed, had heard of no other instance of a signal deliverance, vouchsafed by God in mercy and loving-kindness to His people Israel, than that which was effected on the shores of the Red Sea, it would of itself have been sufficient to justify the earnest recommendation which he addresses to us, as a people, to place our unqualified trust in God, our Father and our Protector. But the Hebrew poet was well aware, that ever since the period when Israel was God's beloved child, and was brought out of Egypt,[17] Almighty Providence had watched over the Abrahamic family, and had visibly controlled their destinies. Nor is there an Israelite to be found at the present day who is deficient in that knowledge, and who cannot bear his testimony to the literal fulfilment of God's gracious promise; "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and the rivers shall not overwhelm thee; and when thou walkest in the fire, thou shalt not be scorched."[18]

What is Jewish history but a succession of signal deliverances, which even considered singly cannot be set down in the catalogue of accidents? How much less can they be thus classed when they are viewed in their combination? What is Jewish history but a colossal monument bearing witness to the solemn truths of our Scriptures, and preserving the perennial inscription, "O Israel, trust in the Lord?" Moses was charged to tell our fathers whilst they were yet in

[17] Hosea xi. 1. [18] Isaiah xliii. 2.

the desert and on their road to Canaan, that although the Almighty would drive them out from the land of promise, if they should obstinately refuse to obey His voice, and although He would disperse them amongst all nations and peoples, yet He would never forsake them utterly.[19] Centuries after this, the Lord renewed unto His people the same covenant of mercy and love through the Prophet Isaiah, assuring us that notwithstanding the whirlwind might arise, and the shock of the earthquake might be felt, כי ההרים ימושו והגבעות תמוטינה "that notwithstanding the mountains might be upheaved and the hills be overthrown," חסדי מאתך לא ימוש וברית שלמי לא תמוט "My mercy from thee shall not be removed, and My peaceful covenant shall not be broken."[20] Moreover it was divinely promised that as God's covenant with Noah would be perpetuated by the clear, sensible, sign of the קשת (rainbow), which every eye might behold; so should His covenant with Israel be eternized by a sign equally obvious, equally distinct, in the continuous preservation of the Jewish people in their full religious identity.

Brethren, I am not now rehearsing to you the mere effusions of poetry, nor am I asking your attention to facts, which are incapable of being brought home to your own knowledge and experience. The dead letter of Scripture which sets forth God's covenant with Israel would lose much of its force, if we Jews were not here to-day to breathe into it a living spirit, even as the appearance of the rainbow from time to time imparts reality to the covenant made with

[19] See Leviticus xxvi. [20] Isaiah liv. 10.

Noah. When we lift up our eyes to the heavens, after the fertilizing showers have descended, and we recognize the glorious rainbow combining every hue, we whisper in our hearts, "Thy word, O God, is true;" and when we assemble together on a Festival like the Passover, as one congregation, or rather as one great Jewish family, we can hardly fail to bend with reverence before the inspiration of our Scriptures, and inwardly to exclaim, "Great, merciful Father, our preservation to this day is a living evidence that Thy covenant with Israel endureth still."

When we call these facts to mind, we surely cannot be at a loss to reply to the sceptic, who asks, why the voice of prophecy is now no longer heard, and why the ordinary operations of nature are not now occasionally suspended by the performance of a miracle as in olden times. We are no longer dependent on a repetition of the oracle or of the astounding sign, to convince us that God is the Lord, and that our Scriptures are true; because in every Jew now assembled, prophecies and miracles still combine and act. If the preservation of the Jewish people, under any circumstances, is a marvellous event, for which no rational explanation can be assigned, how much more wonderful does it become, when it is found to be clearly predicted in the ancient books of Scripture? According to the invariable laws of nations, separate communities merge, after a time, into the common mass; but with the Jews alone this universal law fails to operate.[21] Though Jews are to be found in every part of the world, and though they completely

[21] See Bishop Newton's Dissertation on the Prophecies, section 2.

identify themselves with the country whose citizens they are, still they keep themselves religiously distinct. We do not live according to our ancient local and political laws; we have not, nor do we desire to have, our own Jewish magistrates; and we have no political longings save those which we can gratify in the land of our birth. In no single thing do we consider ourselves apart from our compatriots, except in our religious belief and worship; but in this we have remained, and we have God's own word for it that we ever shall remain, distinct.

Through the praiseworthy exertions of one of our distinguished countrymen,[22] the grave of ancient Assyria has of late been opened, and many monuments have been exhumed, valuable to the antiquarian, to the historian, and chief of all to the believer in the Bible. But where be the remnant of the Assyrians themselves, or where be the Phœnicians, the Chaldeans, or the Medes? They are no more. Time has shipwrecked them, and destroyed every vestige of them as a people. "To go no further than our own country," says a modern writer, "if, for instance, the Aborigines, the Saxons, the Danes, or the Normans, were disposed to separate themselves, how vain and futile would be the attempt."[23] The Britons of the present day cannot trace their descent with certainty to any of the peoples which in early times made their way into this country and swayed its destinies. The lineal descendants of ancient Gaul cannot now be separated from those of other nations, which have at various times settled in France; and few Spanish

[22] Dr. Layard. [23] Habershon on the Prophetic Scriptures, p. 94.

families, if any, can now accurately determine whether they be descended from the ancient settlers in the Peninsula, from the Goths, or the Moors. But the identity of a Jew, of what country soever he be, is distinctly preserved, by means of his religious creed. We can all deduce our origin from the earliest times; and although we may be ignorant of the particular tribe of Israel to which we belong, we know that we are all of the family of Abraham,[24] and that one common faith unites us, and preserves us religiously distinct. Now when we consider that this remarkable fact is in strict accordance with the declaration of prophecy, and that it bears indisputable evidence of the paternal care with which God has watched over us, we cannot resist the conclusion, that the Guardian of Israel has proved Himself entitled to our fullest confidence. We may therefore well acquiesce in the advice of the Psalmist, and adopt as our watchword the emphatic admonition of the text, "O Israel, trust in the Lord."

II. The proposition that the passage of the text applies equally to every Israelite in his individual capacity may be illustrated in a very few words. When we assemble here, brethren, on a Festival like the Passover, which marks the progress of our years, it is reasonable to suppose that every right-thinking man will direct his mind to the varied blessings which he has received, to the benefits which he now enjoys, and to those which he still hopes to obtain as he advances in his career. Now if our thoughts take this bent, the question will naturally suggest

[24] Newton's Dissertations, section 2.

itself, whether our past blessings have been, or whether our future expectations will be, realized, by mortal aid, or by the dispensations of that Almighty hand which wields the destinies of us all ? In every member of our congregation we recognize a separate and independent proof of the Lord's Providence and care. There are here amongst us many in the bloom of youth and energy, and many also who are far advanced on the road of life. But whatever be our respective ages, hope is not dead within us. We all entertain speculations that extend over a number of years, and we anticipate a succession of blessings and enjoyments. Here are parents who live again in their beloved children, and who hope to see their sons and daughters grow to manhood and womanhood, and to be prosperous and happy through life. Here also are many worthy and dutiful children, who desire to become supports to their parents, to remove from them anxiety and sorrow, and to spread cheerfulness and contentment over the evening of their lives; and in order to effect these cherished objects, such children entertain the most confident expectations that success will attend them in their several callings and pursuits. Again, there must be many here whom brotherhood and friendship have united, many who have a prayer to put up for the recovery of some beloved one from sickness, for the comforting of some dear one in affliction or bereavement, and for the accomplishment of this or of that project, in which, according to human calculation the well-being of themselves and their families is bound up.

Now we might all impress the text of this day on our own hearts, if we would simply enquire,

upon what power it depends whether our hopes shall be fulfilled, or whether they shall wither away? Experience must have taught us that we are not all-sufficient for ourselves, and that we are utterly impotent, without a blessing from above, to effect the good purposes which we have so much at heart. Our bodies suffer from weakness, and our minds from anxiety and fatigue; and as the former are subject to physical ailments, so the latter are in danger of delusion and error. By the merciful Providence of God we derive no inconsiderable support from the sympathy and aid which are so constantly interchanged amongst the several members of the great human family; but we have all especial wants to which no mortal can minister. Besides, man cannot always be depended on; we can have no reliance on his aid, or on the constancy of his friendship, which the slightest deviation from his capricious views may forfeit; nor can we secure his fortune or his influence against the many vicissitudes to which all mortals are exposed, from the labourer at the plough, to the monarch on his throne. How affecting then in their truthfulness are the words of the sweet singer of Israel, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in mortal man who is powerless to help. His breath goeth forth, he mingleth with his native earth: on that day his projects vanish."[25]

In God, in God alone is our help; in Him therefore let us confide: ישראל בטח ביי "O Israel, trust in the Lord." Let us trust in Him who, as the Patriarch Jacob says, "has fed me from the commencement of

[25] Psalm cxlvi. 3, 4.

my being unto this day;"[26] in Him who has carried us safely through the successive stages of infancy and childhood, and through the dangers that have beset our riper years; in Him who knows our several wants and necessities better than we ourselves can know them; in Him who is gracious and merciful alike in what He bestows upon us, and in what He withholds from us.

Let the remembrance of the Passover dispose us, brethren, to implant in our hearts this religious virtue, which will confer upon us true moral excellence. It will keep our steps from sliding in the day of our prosperity, and will save us from sinking into despair in the trying time of adversity. In every case, it will incline us to bend in humility to the dispensations of God, and to resign into His hands whatever we possess, exclaiming with the pious Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away," יהי שם יי מברך "Praised be the name of the Lord."[27] Let us endeavour to cultivate this pious sentiment, and we shall experience all the practical effects of the words of the holy Prophet ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח ביי והיה יי מבטחו "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord will be his refuge."[28]

[26] Genesis xlviii. 15. [27] Job i. 21. [28] Jeremiah xvii. 7.

## XXI.

# ON THE REVELATION AT SINAI, AND THE PERPETUITY AND IMMUTABILITY OF THE MOSAIC LAW.

*Preached on the Festival of Pentecost*, 5607, (*May* 21, 1847.)

Exodus, xix. 9.

אמר י׳ אל משה הנה אנכי בא אליך בעב הענן בעבור
ישמע העם בדברי עמך וגם בך יאמינו לעולם

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold I will appear to thee in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak to thee, and that they may believe in thee for ever."

Brethren, the words just recited place us in immediate connection with the astounding revelation at Sinai, upon which our present Festival is based. They call back our minds to a scene, full of majesty and awe, over which more than three thousand years have closed. But if thrice that number of years had been marked by the register of time, this scene would be as vivid, and its glory as bright; for of no occurrence on this earth has Almighty Providence left a stronger and more enduring remembrance. The text invites us to survey the lowest of a range of mountains, at the base of which a whole nation of

more than two millions of souls is assembled. Scarcely seven weeks have passed since these human beings, now awaiting the declaration of God's holy will, were claimed and held as the property of a vain and tyrannical ruler, and were treated little better than beasts of burden. They were enslaved in body and in mind, and were not suffered to think or to act but according to the despotic will of their hard-hearted oppressor. Now, if we may measure time by the great events which it brings to pass, the people encamped near the mountain have lived an age. They have seen their cruel persecutors engulphed in the waters, the grave to which many a new-born Jewish infant, torn from its mother's fond embrace, had been consigned by the sanguinary edicts of the Pharaohs; they have seen their freedom secured on a firm basis at a time when the danger of a second servitude was imminent, and when all hope appeared to be cut off: they have seen fresh water-springs gush forth from the flinty rock, to slake their thirst; they have seen food rained down from Heaven day by day for the supply of themselves and their families; they have known what it is to enjoy true Sabbath rest; they have experienced the beneficial consequences of a righteous tribunal, where poor and rich, high and low are patiently heard and equitably judged; and they have happily learned that the government which Moses was charged to establish for them, exists for the good and happiness of all, and not for the private ends of the few. In fine, freedom and the dawning of civilization, have wrought a great change in the condition of the Israelites within the lapse of a few weeks, and we now behold them assembled with

one accord to take counsel of their Almighty Redeemer, to learn from Him the uses to which they are to apply their newly acquired liberty, and what course of life they are to pursue, in order that they may discharge faithfully their office of a "kingdom of priests," which their leader has just informed them they are to become.

The verse of the text sets forth the gracious manner in which the Lord is about to enlighten the minds of His people, to fortify their hearts, and to confirm their faith, from generation to generation, in the doctrines of Divine truth and holiness. 'I will appear to thee (Moses) in the dense cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and so that they may believe in thee and in thy teachings for ever.' The Hebrews are enjoined to prepare themselves for this awful communion, by abstaining from every sensual indulgence, by abstracting their minds from all earthly thoughts, and by reflecting maturely on the mercy and loving-kindness which the Lord has shewn to them, since the day when he deputed Moses to the Egyptian Court to demand their manumission. At the end of three days devoted to solemn preparation, the promise recorded in the text is accomplished. The thunder rolls, the lightning flashes, the earth quakes, and the solemn peal of the *Shophar* is heard. To speak in the thrilling words of the Psalmist, האירו ברקיו תבל ראתה ותחל הארץ: הרים כדונג נמסו מלפני יי מלפני אדון כל הארץ: "The immensity of space is illumined by the lightnings of God; the earth looks on and trembles. The mountains dissolve like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Sovereign

of all the earth ;[1] and whilst הגידו השמים צדקו וראו כל העמים כבודו the heavens are declaring His righteousness, and all the people are witnessing His supernal glory,"[2] the voice of the Almighty is heard recalling a backsliding world sunk in superstition and sin, and pronouncing before the assembled nation of witnesses עשרת הדברות (the Decalogue), the ten immortal principles of the Mosaic or Jewish code, the great repository of duty to God and man. Such, brethren, were the manifestations of Divine power and goodness and such were the means employed by the gracious Parent of mankind, in order to inspire with faith, and to crown with salvation, the future generations of the earth.

The chapter from which our text is drawn, does not simply record the important fact of the revelation at Sinai, on which the Festival of שבעות (the Feast of Weeks) is grounded; but it at the same time informs us in the most precise terms, why that revelation was delivered in so public a manner.

The race of Abraham having been redeemed from bondage, and made to think and to feel like men formed in the divine image, were now to commence their sacerdotal office, and to bear the message of truth and light and salvation everlasting unto all the families of the earth. Now before a man is capable of persuading others, he himself must believe ; before he can be earnest, he must be sincere ; before he can be qualified to teach, he must learn and clearly understand. Hence it was of the first consequence that the faith of the Israelites in the articles of

[1] Psalms, xcvii. 4, 5. [2] Ibid. ver. 6.

Divine revelation should be free from doubt, and from all possible misconception, and that what they were to receive as principles of belief, what they were to do, and what they were to refrain from doing, should be distinctly set before them, and with a clearness that would be demonstrable to their senses. Equally essential was it that they should be impressed with the conviction that the Sinaic doctrines were fixed and stable, and that God's word, like His divine nature, was in the strictest sense unchangeable. The Israelites were to be taught that, far different from the enactments of fallible mortals, which can endure for a given time only, and must then give place to the ever-changing circumstances of earthly existence, which the framers of those enactments could not foresee—the laws of God have reference to all times, and anticipate all events in the moral universe: and that whilst His divine code cannot be thwarted in its operation by anything that is actual or possible, He compels all circumstances and events to bend in submission before the high and infallible authority of His mighty word.

These two important features of Jewish theology; viz., the public revelation by God at Sinai, which was to carry conviction to the assembled multitude of Hebrews, and the perpetuity and the unchangeableness of this dispensation, are fully embodied in the verse of the text, which may be paraphrased thus: "I will appear to thee, Moses, in the thick cloud, and I will speak to thee in the audience of the congregated mass of thy people, so that they and their descendants may believe in thee, and confide in thy teachings for ever." With this clear scriptural declaration before

us, we cannot be said to be true disciples of Moses and faithful followers of our ancestors at Sinai, unless we hold firmly and inviolably, that no article of the Sinaic covenant can ever be altered or superseded, and that no dogma which is not there set forth in its plain and obvious sense, can ever be entitled to our religious belief.[3] When the Jew speaks of the divine revelation, he of course understands by that term, the whole Mosaic law, as I shall now proceed to shew.

We are fully warranted to conclude from the Scripture record, that the Almighty would have pronounced every precept found in the Pentateuch in the same audible manner as He spake the Ten Commandments, if the Israelites had been enabled to support His awful presence. But when the people fell back to a distance and implored of Moses, דבר אתה עמנו ונשמעה ואל ידבר עמנו אלהים פן נמות "O speak thou with us and we will attend, but let not God speak with us, lest we die;"[4] the Lord was pleased to grant their request. At a distance of forty years the legislator recalls this circumstance to the minds of his hearers, in the following words. "Now the Lord heard your words when ye spake unto me, and the Lord said, I have heard the words of this people which they spake unto thee: they have spoken well."[5] Moses accordingly receives all future commandments from God, and communicates them to the

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[3] "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. (Deuter. v. 2, 3).

[4] Exodus xx. 19. [5] Deuter. v. 28.

people; at the same time impressing upon their minds that all these laws are based on the articles of the Decalogue: כי על פי הדברים האלה כרתי אתך ברית ואת ישראל "for according to the spirit of these words, I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel."[6] We have therefore scriptural authority for our doctrine, that every ordinance of the Pentateuch is inspired of God, and takes its origin in one of the principles revealed at Sinai; and hence the passage of our text בך יאמינו לעולם "they shall believe in thee for ever," applies to the entire Mosaic code.

From what has been advanced, it must be evident to the Jew that the road to faith and duty is clear before him. He needs not torture his mind with doubts, whether the revelation vouchsafed to his ancestors at Sinai was to be modified after the breaking up of the political nationality of Israel, or whether it was to be eclipsed by any subsequent dispensation. The words of our text, reproduced in their spirit again and again in other parts of the Scriptures, are absolute and unconditional; and it may be unhesitatingly asserted, that even the doctrine that God is One and indivisible is not more scripturally proven, than is the Jewish article embodied in the poem of יגדל "That God will never alter nor change the Mosaic law for any other."[7] The inspired

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[6] Exodus xxxiv. 27. The succeeding verse clearly informs us what "*these words*" refer to: "And Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he ate no bread and drank no water; and he wrote upon the tables את דברי הברית עשרת הדברים *these words of the Covenant, the* TEN COMMANDMENTS."

[7] "It is most plainly set forth in the Pentateuch, that the law

Psalmist assures us that תורת יי תמימה "the law of the Lord is perfect,"[8] and every man's reason will tell him, that a code which the voice of inspiration pronounces to be perfect, cannot admit of any change or modification, without its being impaired; and further, that a law which is perfection, God will never annul.

Between the laws which God has enjoined, and those which mortal man has framed, it behoves us to draw a broad line of distinction. The laws of man can have but a limited duration, because human affairs are subject to perpetual fluctuations and changes. A mortal legislator may institute laws which are well adapted to his own times; but he can have no reasonable confidence that they will be binding on posterity, or that they will be suited to the altered circumstances in which mankind may, at some subsequent period, be placed. The law of God, however, is not to be measured by this varying standard. The Omniscient One grasps in His intelligence all time, the future as well as the present, and He knows what *will be* as certainly as He knows *what is:* and as it is impossible that God should at

(which was given to Moses) is to endure for ever, that nothing therein is to be changed, nothing is to be added thereto or to be diminished therefrom; for it is said, "All the words which I command you, you shall observe to do: thou shalt not add to them nor diminish from them." And it is said, "What is revealed appertains to us and to our children for ever, in order that we may perform all the words of this law." Hence we learn that it is incumbent upon us to perform the entire law for ever. Again it is said, "It is a perpetual ordinance throughout your generations."—(Maimonides Hel. Jesode Hattorah, 9, 1).

[8] Psalms xix. 8.

any future time be wiser or holier, more benevolent to His children, or more desirous to promote their happiness, than He was on the day when He revealed Himself to our fathers at Sinai; so it is impossible that He should ever change His perfect law for any other.

Let us hold firm, brethren, to this doctrine, which places Judaism upon an immoveable rock—to this doctrine, which is the grand theme of the holy Prophets from Moses to Malachi. Whilst the inspired Isaiah reproves his brethren for giving themselves up entirely to ceremonial observances, and for neglecting the essentials or the moral duties of Judaism, he emphatically declares that God demands of them and of all future ages, what he required of the former generations of Israel: אני יי ראשון ואת אחרנים אני הוא "I, the Lord, the first; and with the last generations I am the same."[10] In the fulness of his inspiration, the same Prophet predicts a period when brute force shall be extinct, and mind shall be triumphant; when weapons of strife shall be converted into implements of husbandry;[11] when creatures in whom the most deeply-rooted antipathies exist, shall be brought into concord and harmony, and when love shall be the one governing principle of the universe. To approximate this golden period, called the age of the Messiah, the good of all sects and creeds are constantly labouring. For this the rich man dispossesses himself of a portion of his wealth; for this the poor man submits to privation and murmurs

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[10] Isaiah xli. 4.

[11] The poetic figure of the Hebrews for universal peace.

not; for this the school-house and the pulpit rear their heads. Amongst the worthy men who are exerting themselves to this important end, do you, my Jewish brethren, be ever active; and remember that the Prophet Isaiah not only teaches, that the practice of the pure Mosaic religion is calculated to lead man to the highest moral perfection; but he tells us that the blessings of the Messianic age shall be accomplished in the spirit and in the integrity of the Sinaic Covenant. When the Hebrews shall have worthily discharged their office as a "kingdom of priests," when "they shall have filled the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the the seas, [12] ויראו ממערב את שם י׳ וממזרח שמש את כבודו "And when they from the west shall revere the name of the Lord, and they from the east His glory, ובא לציון גואל A Redeemer shall come to Zion." [13] But according to the Prophet, the גואל spoken of is not to set aside the covenant which God made with the Israelites at Sinai, but he is to come in the integrity of the Mosaic law. "This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy children, nor out of the mouth of thy latest posterity, saith the Lord, from this time forth for ever."[14] The same Jewish doctrine of the perpetuity of the Mosaic law, is taught by Malachi, when he places the seal on prophecy, in these memorable words, זכרו תורת משה עבדי אשר צויתי אותו בחרב על כל ישראל חקים ומשפטים "Remember the law of Moses, my

[12] Isaiah xi. 9. [13] Ibid. lix. 19, 20. [14] Ibid. v. 21.

servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, the statutes and the ordinances."[15]

Having now endeavoured to impress upon you, my hearers, the two important articles of your faith—the public revelation by God at Sinai, and the perpetuity and the unchangeableness of this dispensation, let me remind you of the words spoken by your fathers at the Mount, כל אשר דבר י׳ נעשה "All that the Lord hath spoken we will perform."[16] Adopt these words as your own, brethren, and continue to teach, not by your precepts only, but also by your practice, that there is One God, who must be worshipped in spirit, that He requires of His children a life of holiness and truth, and that if we bring Him not this inner worship, it will be in vain for us to approach His presence, and to strive to secure His divine favor through the performance of external rites, how important soever they be. Adopt the words of your fathers, and continue to teach, "O kingdom of priests," that charity and love are the essentials of faith, and that these virtues must be exercised towards all men without distinction. Continue to teach that Judaism respects the religious opinions of others, and never presumes to violate the sanctity of conscience; and that it accords salvation through the mercy and the loving-kindness of the Universal Father, to all men, of every religious denomination, provided their lives be morally good. Continue to teach that Judaism breathes love to all men, peace to all men, toleration to all men, and that its moral character is well pourtrayed in the sublime

[15] Malachi iii. 22. [16] Exodus xix. 8.

ethical precept, which was born of the Jew, and reared by the Jew, that it might become the common property of future generations: ואהבת לרעך כמוך "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In your capacity, as "a kingdom of priests," it behoves you to make known these doctrines, and to give them vitality by the uniform practice of your own lives, and you have the assurance of your heavenly Father, that if you exert yourselves earnestly and sincerely to this end, you will find favor in the sight of God and of man.

This holy Festival commemorates the day on which was conferred upon Israel to the latest generation, the greatest of all treasures; let us remember the day and duly appreciate the gift: let us respect our faith, and the respect of mankind for us and for our religion, will not tarry long behind. We live in an age, God be thanked and praised, when the narrow prejudices and the sectarian rancour which were once so universally directed against the Jew, are fast disappearing, if they have not altogether died away, and are giving room to the feelings of mutual confidence and love, strengthened by the sacred ties of a common country and of equal citizenship. Now to what cause are we to ascribe this beneficial change? Are *we* Hebrews of the present day less Jews than our fathers were in the middle centuries; have we put aside our distinctive religious character; have we abandoned any of the principles of our hallowed creed; or have we compromised our consciences in any way to win the popular favor? No, my hearers, we have not sacrificed, and I feel that I am not saying too much when I venture to assert that as a body, we never

shall sacrifice, at the shrine of power, of honors or of immunities, any doctrine of the sacred covenant which the Lord made with our fathers and with us. With all due allowance for the humanizing influence exerted by the spread of education, it is not sufficient to account for the great change which has come over men with regard to their sentiments towards the Jews. I cannot but think that the cause is to be sought for in this; that the Jew is beginning to be better known, and that the practices of his faith are better understood than they formerly were. In byegone ages, the persecutions to which the sons of Israel were exposed, obliged them to live in retirement, and to perform in secresy their worship; this secresy probably gave rise to suspicion; and suspicion, to gross misrepresentations. Hence the Jews were accused of the most outrageous and revolting practices, and amongst the number, that of shedding human blood for the inauguration of the Passover, a calumny which, not many years ago, was seriously believed by a great number of simple-minded persons. But these things are passed away. We have outgrown the fear of being observed from without, we have laid aside the drapery of mourning and despair with which our Synagogues were hung in the iron ages of persecution, and we have brought ourselves more prominently before the public gaze. The consequences have been that many misconceptions concerning the Jew and his religion, which took their rise in ignorance, are removed. It is now discovered that we may be sincere and zealous Israelites, and at the same time loyal subjects and patriotic and useful citizens; and that whilst we are

peculiar in our religious belief, and in our religious practices, we seek no ascendancy for our creed, nor presume to urge it on the consciences of others, but that we proclaim and practice toleration in its widest sense. If these principles, which are as old as Judaism itself, may not have been made manifest by our ancestors for many centuries after the fall of Jerusalem and the annihilation of our political nationality, the cause must be sought in the galling persecutions to which the Jew was subjected, and which denied him the opportunity of being heard in his own defence against the unfounded prejudices with which he was assailed from every quarter. Yet in the midst of their sufferings the rabbins never failed to impress their disciples with the pure Jewish teaching, חסידי האמות יש להם חלק לעולם הבא "that the pious of all sects and creeds are rewarded by God with salvation everlasting."[17] But it well behoves us, brethren, who live in happier times, to give evidence of our faith by our teachings and by our conduct; so shall we call down upon us the benediction of Him who revealed His law at Sinai; and so shall we, by moral means, conquer for ourselves that *equal* position in the land of our birth to which we boldly assert our claims. The time is rapidly drawing near when these claims must be acknowledged, and when the only blot on the code of our beloved country, as far as religious freedom is concerned, will be obliterated.

Let then our watchword be לתורה ולתעודה "for the law and for the testimony;"[18] let our earnestness

[17] Maimonides Hilchoth Teshuba. iii. 5. [18] Isaiah viii. 20.

indicate the sincerity of our religious belief, and let our conduct towards God and man give ample proof that we are the worthy descendants of the men of Sinai, who promised כל אשר דבר יי נעשה "to perform all that the Almighty had commanded them."

## XXII.

## יום תרועה THE DAY OF BLOWING THE TRUMPET, (NEW YEAR) A SOLEMN PREPARATION FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (יום הכפרים).

*Preached on the First Day of Tishri*, 5606 (*October 1st*, 1845).

JOEL ii. 15.

תקעו שופר בציון קדשו צום קראו עצרה

"Sound the Shophar in Zion, sanctify the fast, proclaim the solemn Assembly."

THE text just quoted appears to have a marked reference to the intention as well as to the duties of the sacred institution of יום תרועה "the day of sounding the trumpet," whilst at the same time it directs our thoughts to the three important holidays which are commanded to be solemnized in the seventh month. "Sound the Shophar in Zion," is expressive of the Festival on which we are now met; "Sanctify the fast," points to the Day of Atonement; and "Proclaim the solemn Assembly," most probably applies to the closing solemnity of the Feast of Tabernacles, called שמיני עצרת. Agreeably to the order in which the passage runs, we can hardly fail to view the

institution of יום תרועה as a prelude and preparation to the awful Day of Atonement; and a similar conclusion may be fairly induced from the wording of the scriptural text, in which the ordinance of "the day of sounding the trumpet" is mentioned for the first time. In Leviticus, (xxiii. 24), we read, "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, there shall be unto you a sabbath, a memorial of sounding the trumpet, a holy convocation;" and this passage is almost immediately followed by the commandment, אך בעשור לחדש השביעי הזה יום הכפרים הוא, "Likewise on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement;"[1] and here the particle אך (likewise) appears to unite יום תרועה with יום הכפרים precisely as it connects the Festival of סכות (Tabernacles) with the observance of פרי עץ הדר כפות תמרים וכו׳, the fruit of the *Hadar*[2] tree, the palm branches, etc."[3]

If then the "holy convocation" on which we are now assembled is principally intended as a season of solemn preparation to the Day of Atonement, no observance can be better calculated to arouse us to reflection, and to make the words of the Prophet, "O Israel, prepare to meet thy God,"[4] sink deeper into our hearts, than that of sounding the *Shophar*:[5] hence the Psalmist's words, "Happy is the people that appreciates the stirring sound; they walk, O Lord! in the light of thy countenance."[6] Nearly every great and solemn event which is recorded in

[1] Leviticus xxiii. 27. [2] *The citron*, according to the Talmud.
[3] See Leviticus xxiii. 34 to 40 inclusive. [4] Amos iv. 12.
[5] The *Shophar* is considered to have been a kind of trumpet made of horn (see Gesenius on the word שׁוֹפָר). [6] Psalm lxxxix. 16.

Scripture is accompanied by this important ceremonial. The Israelites are convoked at Sinai to receive the revelation of God's holy will; and amidst the rolling of the thunder and the shock of the earthquake, the piercing sounds of the *Shophar* are distinctly heard by the assembled multitude of witnesses to the inspiration of the Scriptures.[7] The כהן הגדול (High Priest) performs the awful rite of the Day of Atonement in the "holy of holies;" he makes a confession of sin for himself, for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel, and implores the clemency and grace of the Supreme King of kings; and scarcely are the cheering words סלחתי כדברך, "I have pardoned according to thy prayer," whispered to his heart than the peal of the *Shophar* is heard. When the year of the Jubilee is announced—the blessed year which proclaims freedom throughout the land, and publishes the glad tidings, that the hardships induced by misfortune, as well as the just punishments entailed by evil-doing, have a period of termination, and again is heard the loud blast of the *Shophar*.[8] The Prophet Isaiah predicts a bright and glorious future, when the whole human race is to be linked in the bonds of enduring love; and he tells us that this mighty event is to be heralded by תקיעת שופר. "In that day," says he, "יתקע בשופר גדול, the great Shophar shall be sounded, and those who are ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt shall come והשתחוו ליי בהר הקדש בירושלים and do homage to the Lord, on the mountain of holiness, in Jerusalem."[9]

[7] Exodus xix. 16, 19; and xx. 17. [8] Levit. xxv. 9.
[9] Isaiah xxvii. 13

Brethren, it behoves us well to give our earnest attention to the duties of the holy convocation on which we are met, and to enter into a rigorous examination concerning our inward state, as we listen to the voice of the *Shophar*, announcing the fast-approaching Day of Atonement, when we shall have to plead at the tribunal of Him who is sanctified in righteousness, and to implore His mercy and forgiveness for the many sins which we have committed against His holy and gracious laws. Let us not be heedless of the prophetic words: אם יתקע שופר בעיר ועם לא יחרדו, "Shall the *Shophar* be sounded in the city, and shall the people not be moved?"[10] But when its notes fall upon our ears this day, let us be warned in time by the grave instruction which it conveys, and let us shut out from our minds all mundane thoughts, and devote ourselves to serious meditation.

First, let the *Shophar* remind us that we are to prepare to meet our God, and let it instruct us in what this preparation consists. There are many delusions into which men at all ages are prone to fall, but surely none can be more fatal than that which possesses the minds of some members of the house of Israel, that the Almighty does not require our obedience at *all* times, nor demand of us a daily and hourly observance of His precepts;[11] but that he looks leniently upon our deviations from the path of duty, so long as we do not cast off every principle of His divine covenant, and so long as we keep sacred *one*

[10] Amos iii. vi.

[11] ר׳ יוסי אומר אדם נידון בכל יום ר׳ נתן אומר אדם נידון בכל שעה "R. Jose says, men are judged on every day: R. Nathan says, they are judged at every hour" (Rosh. Hash. 16).

*day* in the year, and devote it to mortification, to fasting and prayer. It is strange, however, that such a fallacious notion should have obtained currency in Israel, since Moses and the Prophets most solemnly warn us against resting our hopes of obtaining the approbation of the Almighty on the efficacy of mere outward rites. Can any Jew, who has attentively studied his Bible, have failed to discover, that it was not the sacrifice of goats or of oxen, nor the observance of a fast, which reconciled sinful man to his righteous Maker on the Day of Atonement; but a public confession of sin and a sincere determination to sin designedly no more.[12] Let any man who may have misgivings on the scriptural foundations of this doctrine, open the sacred volume of the Pentateuch, and he will find it there authoritatively taught, that the sinner cannot bring his atonement offering, so long as he continues in his transgression, and so long as he derives from it any worldly advantage.[13] He must renounce his evil course, or dispossess himself of whatever he may have unjustly and unlawfully acquired; and after he has made full restitution, and has publicly confessed his transgression, he may approach the footstool of holiness to make his atonement. Here then is a great scriptural truth, which needs no comment. Possibly such a teaching may not accord with the notions which many

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[12] כל המתודה בדברים ולא גמר בלבו לעזוב הרי זה דומה לטובל ושרץ בידו "He that makes a confession with his lips, but does not resolve in his heart to abandon his evil ways, may be compared to a man who bathes without casting impurity from his hands" (Maimonides. Hilchoth Teshuba, 2).

[13] See Leviticus, chapter v.

have formed with regard to the efficacy of fasting and prayer, but the records of holy writ are not to be gainsaid; and woe unto that preacher who shall say, "Fast and pray, and the Day of Atonement shall absolve you from your iniquities," when the Lord, in whose name he is charged to exhort his congregation, has promised forgiveness and life eternal to them only, whose inward sentiments are in keeping with the pious expressions which their lips pour forth.

The Prophet Ezekiel particularly addresses himself to Jewish teachers, called צופים or "watchmen," in these emphatic words. "When I say unto the sinner, O wicked man, thou shalt surely perish, if thou dost not speak to warn the sinner from his way, that wicked man shall perish in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. But if thou dost warn the wicked of his way to depart from it, and he do not turn from his way, he shall perish in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thine own soul."[14] Let me then, dear brethren, endeavour to discharge faithfully the duty of a צופה or "watchman," by affectionately and earnestly exhorting you to put away from your minds all notions that might lead you astray concerning the perfect holiness of God and His moral attributes, and all vain thoughts that anything short of sincere contrition for sin, made evident by practical amendment, can obtain forgiveness at the throne of grace Let none of us deceive ourselves with the thought that, because the Day of Atonement is a perpetual ordinance in Israel, it will,

[14] Ezekiel xxxiii. 8, 9.

therefore, bring mercy and grace to those who withdraw from sin on that day only, and pass it in confession and prayer. But let us take Scripture, and not superstition, for our authority, and we shall then readily discover, that the Supreme King of kings, before whose eye the human heart is laid bare, and all its secret workings are exposed, will judge us on the יום הכפורים *not* in reference to the outward conduct which we display on that particular day, but according to the uniform tenor of our lives.

Be it very far from me, brethren, to lead you to undervalue in the slightest degree the paramount importance of the institution of the Day of Atonement, which the Lord has mercifully vouchsafed to ordain for the benefit of His erring children. It has pleased our heavenly Father to give us definite laws for the regulation of our conduct through life, and we may rest assured that He who fashioneth our hearts, and knoweth full well the moral energy which we are capable of exerting, would not have enjoined upon us His commandments, and made our eternal reward to depend upon our fulfilment of them, if He was not infallibly certain that with us is the power, if we have the will, to do His divine bidding. At the same time, our merciful God, aware of the weakness of the best amongst us, and of our proneness to act often from the impulse of passion, from excitement and inadvertency, has graciously ordained one day in the year, when after having previously communed with our hearts, and deliberated on our short-comings, we may present ourselves in public congregation at the footstool of His throne, and humbled by fasting, by self-denial, and by prayer, we may render manifest

the contrition of our hearts, and be enabled to implore with sincerity His divine forgiveness, and to obtain it. But if we regard the Day of Atonement in reference to its formalities only, and if we do not resolve to shun in future the sins which we profess to deplore, if we do not sincerely determine to renounce every unjust advantage which we might take of a fellow-creature, every unlawful desire, and to cease from violating the Sabbath-day, it would be most unreasonable of us to expect, in defiance of the express teachings of Scripture,[16] that our prayers and confessions should be heard, our fast accepted, and our atonement made.

Let these important truths have great weight with us, brethren, when the *Shophar* summons us to prepare to meet our God. We shall then perceive that repentance, properly understood, is not a sudden emotion of the mind, but the result of calm and serious self-examination; and we shall further understand why the holy day on which we are now assembled was commanded to us as a time of preparation, and also why our pious fathers instituted the "ten penitential days," extending from the first to the tenth day of the seventh month.

2ndly. Let the *Shophar* remind us that this is the day from which Israelites have, for many centuries past, dated the commencement of their years,[17] and that with the setting of yesterday's sun, another year of our earthly life passed away "as a watchword in

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[16] See Isaiah, chapter lviii.

[17] The Pentateuch fixes the vernal equinox as the commencement

the night."[18] We have marched with time, brethren, and we have come up nearer to eternity by a whole year, which considering the limited period that we are permitted to be tenants of the earth, is an important section of our lives. A year is added to the account which we shall all have to render up to God, and we have a year less to regain the time that we have mis-spent, and to repair the wrongs we have done. Let those amongst us who are parents reflect well, that we have a year less to pass in the bosom of our families, a year less to train our children, by precept and example, to a holy and useful life; a year less to perform to them those duties, the recollection of which, if they be well discharged, will bring us consolation and peace, when we are lying upon our mortal couch, and when the spirit is struggling to go free from the prison-house of the body. When the Shophar is

of the Jewish year, but for more than twenty centuries the Israelites have dated their new year from the autumnal equinox, which takes place about the period when the Festival of יום תרועה, or the day of blowing the trumpet, is held. Upon this innovation the learned Dr. Munk observes, "Selon la tradition des Rabbins, cette fête [יום תרועה] était l'anniversaire de la création, et ils l'appellent ROSCH HASCH-SCHANAH (le commencement de l'année); mais l'année des anciens Hebreux commençait evidemment vers l'équinoxe du printemps et Moïse dit expressément, en parlant du mois *Abib* qui est la lune du printemps: *il sera pour vous le premier des mois de l'année* (Exode xii, 2). Il n' existe pas de trace, dans toute la Bible, d'une solennité pour le premier jour de l'an. Cette solennité, rattacheé par les Rabbins au premier jour du septième mois, était inconnue aux anciens Hebreux et n'a commencé probablement qu'apres la mort d' Alexandre le Grand, lorsque les Juifs sous la domination syro-macedonienne, adoptèrent l'êre des Séleucides; car l'année des Syriens commençait à l' équinoxe d' automne, par le mois d' Octobre."—(Palestine, p. 184, b.)

[18] Psalms xc. 4.

sounded to-day, let us enquire of ourselves, whether as parents we have faithfully discharged to our children all the obligations that we owe them; whether we have seriously exerted ourselves to remove from before them the stumbling blocks which we had placed in their way; and whether we have disciplined them so as to enable us to indulge the hope that they will become good Israelites, good men, and good citizens? Let the *Shophar* also dispose us to enquire, whether we are prepared to meet our God, and to yield into His hands with holy trust, the spirit with which He has quickened us, if it should be His divine will to send us His awful message before this year shall close, צו לביתך כי מת אתה "Put thy house in order for thou must die."[19] Most merciful Father, when Thou dost bring us thus into communion with our hearts, may it be Thy gracious will to impress us with the solemn conviction that life is short and that our obligations are infinite; so shall we heed the sacred rites of this day, so shall we be reminded of our eternity and moral accountability, and so shall we be induced to employ the span of life which is yet ours, in works pleasing to Thee, O God, and conducive to our salvation.

Lastly, let the sound of the Shophar act as a timely and wholesome admonition to every youthful Israelite who is joined in this holy convocation. Every one, dear children, who is influenced by sentiments of piety and philanthropy, must take the liveliest interest in your present and prospective happiness, for you are heirs to the goodly portion of Jacob, which you

[19] Isaiah xxxviii. 1.

must preserve and transmit unimpaired to them that shall come after you. If, then, your pastor craves your attention for a few moments, I entreat you to believe that it is because he desires your welfare, and because he has no wish nearer at heart than that your conduct through life may furnish the best illustration which can be offered of the moral beauty of Judaism. Often have you been told that your religion does not demand you to be gloomy and austere; but that Judaism perfectly consists with a lively and elastic disposition, and with a cheerful and happy heart. At your innocent age, religion must be to you a pure and solid blessing; it cannot allow terror or sad apprehension to dwell within your hearts, but it must fill you with hope and joy. Nevertheless, children, religion has its serious calls, to which you are required to listen even now, although you do not yet anticipate the period when you will cease to be young, a period when you will in vain look for a righteous harvest, unless you be wise enough to implant the good seed in your hearts at the present season. Let the sound of the Shophar remind you that your most valuable estate, I mean your time, has been diminished by the subtraction of a whole year. It is to be hoped that the year which is past has been well employed by you for your moral and mental advancement; but remember that this period of time has told its tale upon your parents and guardians, who are far advanced in their earthly pilgrimage, and that you have a year less to lean upon them for support, a year less to be blessed by a father's fond superintendence, a year less to enjoy a mother's tender and disinterested love. Do you then

this day commune with your hearts, and enquire whether you have endeavoured to repay your parents for the many anxious days and sleepless nights which they have passed on your account; for their affectionate solicitude and care whilst you were helpless infants; for their watchfulness by your side when sickness held you fast to the couch; for the self-denial which they have practised for your sakes, and for the pains which they have taken to provide for your future years, and to qualify you for the several stations in life which you may be called to fill? Think of these things to-day, children, when the *Shophar* sounds, and if conscience tells you that you have in any instance failed of the duties which you owe your parents, hasten to repair your fault; prove to them the sincerity of your gratitude and affection; obtain from them their parental blessing and strive to deserve it.

Do not, my children, consider the distinguishing rite of this holy day, as if it were a ceremonial that had no moral end in view;[20] but let it remind you, that, as you have observed, whilst standing on the sea shore, wave rolling after wave, until it is lost in the profound abyss, so year rolls after year, and generation after generation, never to come back

[20] "Although the blowing of the *Shophar* is a ceremonial, scripturally ordained, it has, moreover, an admonitory power: Awake, ye slumberers from your drowsiness! you sleepers from your torpor! muster your actions! turn with repentance! remember your Creator! Ye that forget the truth in the vanities of the times, and fritter away the whole year in emptiness and things of nought, which neither profit nor avail—look to your souls! improve your ways and your works! let every one of you forsake the badness of his way, and the wickedness of his thoughts." (Maimonides Hilchoth Teshuba, iii. 4.)

again. If then a life made up of a few years, which follow each other so rapidly, were accorded to you to the full complement of threescore years and ten, beyond which period the psalmist tells us that few survive, it would quickly pass away. But every child whom I am now addressing, is well aware that no one can confidently reckon upon any period of time, however brief it may be. In the material world you may talk of certainty for a season; but in the history of mortals, you cannot count upon a certain day. A year is now snatched away from our grasp, children—a year, every day of which lighted many into existence, and conducted many to the tomb, and with the present day a new year rises upon us. But we cannot yet claim it as *our* year; since He that dwelleth on high, and controlleth the destinies of us all, infallibly knoweth that of the thousands of His children who are now in health and vigour, many will not be permitted to see the year close.

The solemn warning of the *Shophar* has, therefore, a universal application, and is addressed to persons of all ages. Well then does it become the youth to take it to heart, and to keep himself constantly prepared by a holy and useful life, so that if the voice of the Lord should summon him to another state of existence, as it summoned the child Samuel to receive the Divine mission, he may be enabled to echo the reply of the youthful Prophet, הנני כי קראת לי "Here am I, for thou hast called me."[21]

And let no one imagine that God's summons is

[21] 1 Samuel iii. 15.

unjust, because it comes to him who is young, since our being prepared to meet our Heavenly Father does not depend upon the number of years which we have lived, but upon the manner in which we have employed the period, be it long or short, which He in His omniscience has allotted to us. Brief though our life be, it is a treasure beyond all price; and if a few years only were permitted to elapse between the hour at which we come upon the earth and that at which we make our grave therein, everything would depend upon the uses to which we might devote this little interval. Carry home then with you, my children, from the Synagogue to-day, this important lesson, that from the moment when you are capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, a single day passed by you in idleness, and without improving your talents and advancing yourselves in holiness, is a loss to be deeply regretted; and that so much the more, because it may not be in your power to retrieve it.

When I admonish you to lead a holy life, children, I do not simply mean that you should think seriously and pray devoutly, but I would have you construe the admonition thus: that every step you advance in the development of your several faculties and talents, every effort you make to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your means, to conform yourselves to the advice and to the instruction of your parents, and to become good Israelites, upright men, and useful citizens, every charitable gift you bestow on a suffering fellow creature, be his religious belief what it may, every kindly office you discharge, every worthy deed you perform, and every act of self-denial which you practise for a noble and

generous end, conduces to a life of holiness, because it fulfils in the true spirit the requirements of Judaism, and practically illustrates the moral loveliness of תורה צוה לנו משה "the law which Moses commanded us, מורשה קהלת יעקב the heritage of the congregation of Jacob." [22]

Let us hope, dear brethren, that the reflections which I have endeavoured to deduce from the distinguishing rite of the "holy convocation" on which we are now met, may exert a beneficial influence over us at all times, and especially during the ten penitential days, and that they may prepare us to meet our God in judgment, when we shall bring Him our atonement offering on the sacred יום הכפרים (Day of Atonement). Then will He heed our confessions, listen to our supplications, and graciously accept our fast, and then will our Creator rejoice over us as He rejoiced over our Fathers. To Him, therefore, let us put up our earnest petition on this morning of His hallowed Festival; to Him let us pray with a sincere and overflowing heart, בעת רצון "in an acceptable time," imploring Him, in the words of the psalmist, אלהים ברב חסדך ענני באמת ישעך "O God, in the plenitude of Thy mercy, answer me in the truth of Thy salvation." [23] Amen.

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[22] Deut. xxxiii. 4.

[23] Psalms lxix. 14.

## XXIII.

# ON THE MERCY OF GOD, AND ON THE EFFICACY OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

*Preached on the Morning of the Day of Atonement*, 5605 (*Sept.* 23, 1844).

Jonah iv. 10, 11.

### PRAYER.

Holy and righteous Lord! Source of life, Fount of mercy and salvation! summoned by Thy paternal voice, we are here to-day to make our atonement before Thee, and to grasp the hand of forgiveness and grace, which Thou, like the tenderest of fathers, dost hold forth to Thy erring children. We do not come before Thee, Lord, with burnt-offering or incense, but we invoke the outpouring of Thy grace upon us, so that we may bring Thee a sincere and a contrite heart, a sacrifice, O God, which Thou wilt not despise.

Most gracious Lord! Thou hast dealt bountifully towards us, far beyond our deserts, and Thou hast made manifest unto us Thy loving-kindness in various ways, too numerous for the mind to sum up, or for the tongue to recount. And well knowest Thou, O Omniscient One, how much we need Thy continued forbearance and protection, for as years come upon

us our infirmities increase, and as we are carried into the autumn and winter of life, the time draws nearer when we must appear before Thee in judgment. Therefore we do earnestly supplicate Thee to arouse us from our lethargy, and so to impress our minds with a spiritual sense of the Day of Atonement, that we may not regard it as a mere ritual ordinance, but that we may convert it into a reality and a blessing.

To this end, O Heavenly Father! be Thou at this solemn hour implored of Thy unworthy minister, overwhelmed with a sense of the deep responsibility that now weighs upon him, and vouchsafe to send him Thy light and Thy truth. Come Thou to my aid, O Divine Spirit of Truth, and so influence me, a weak and erring servant at the altar, that I may preach the pure Word of God: and be thou also present, O Spirit of Truth, with my congregation, and plead to them with thy native and irresistible eloquence, for God and salvation.

Almighty Lord! with Thee are our times and the measure of our days; and as a vessel is in the hands of the potter, so are we in thy hands. In our ignorance of the future we assign to ourselves many years upon the earth, but Thou alone knowest who amongst us now in health and vigour, shall be permitted to assist in the rites of another יום הכפורים. We therefore cast ourselves upon Thy mercy, imploring Thee from the depths of our hearts to save us from an impenitent death. And if it be Thy divine will that this shall be the last Day of Atonement that some of us are to pass here, grant, O grant in mercy that it may qualify us for our end. May

this day impart to us strength in the coming hour of our weakness, and give us confidence on the mortal couch; may this day subdue our pride, our envy, and our unhallowed desires, and prepare us for our end: and at the close of this day may we be filled with the spiritual sustenance, may we be fortified with the religious hope, and may we experience the inward peace, which we shall all so earnestly desire at the close of our last day in this world. AMEN.

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BRETHREN of the house of Israel! I am addressing you at an hour, when there is scarcely an individual professing himself a Jew, and not disabled by extreme old age or bodily infirmity, who is not joining in divine worship at some Synagogue if it be within his reach. This custom does not date from the present nor the past century; but ever since the time when Moses promulgated to the Israelites in the desert the precepts contained in the twenty-third chapter of the book of Leviticus, the Day of Atonement has not failed, as far as we can discover by the light of history, to summon together in holy convocation all the sons of the house of Jacob. Now an institution like this, which has maintained its hold over the hearts of Israelites for more than three thousand years, and has been the means of communicating a power to Religion by which she asserts a mastery over our cupidity and worldly ambition for a given period, must certainly have presented itself to the universal Jewish mind, in a light far different from that of a mere ritual precept, or an empty religious ceremonial.

But notwithstanding the importance, brethren, which we all attach to the sacred Day of Atonement,

it is an institution, concerning whose real character and object unthinking and scripturally unlettered persons have fallen into serious errors, on account of the combination which it presents of inward and outward worship, and on account of the proneness of weak-minded mortals to confound these two distinct and independent kinds of worship, as if they were alike important and efficacious.

Amongst the external features of the day that are well fitted to strike the imagination are, total abstinence from food, mortification of the appetites, the passing of many hours in confession to God of our iniquities, of our deviations from His supremely wise and gracious laws, and in fervent petitions for His merciful forgiveness and for our restoration to His divine favour. But amidst all these observances, brethren, it is greatly to be feared that many of us have not been sufficiently mindful of the important share which *inward piety* is intended to bear in the sacred institution of the יום הכפורים. Come then, brethren and fellow-transgressors, let us put up a joint petition at the throne of grace that it may please our Merciful Father to illumine our minds with His heavenly light, so that we may be enabled to discover and to comprehend fully the sacred character of the Day of Atonement; and when we shall have ascertained this, it will behove us to enquire which kind of worship, outward or inward, will avail us the more for bringing ourselves within the operation of the act of divine mercy and grace which this hallowed day is intended to dispense. In matters of such vital importance we will not ask counsel of fallible men, but we will go to the

fountain-head, and seek instruction from the inspired page of Scripture, from the living word of God. Turn we then to the fourth chapter of Jonah, and let us give our earnest attention to the two final verses of that prophetical book.

ויאמר יי אתה חסת על הקיקיון אשר לא עמלת בו ולא גדלתו שבן לילה היה ובן לילה אבד : ואני לא אחום על נינוה העיר הגדולה אשר יש בה הרבה משתים עשרה רבו אדם "And the Lord said, thy pity has been excited for the gourd, for which thou hast not laboured and which thou hast not reared, that in a night grew up, and in a night perished. Shall not I then be moved to compassion for Nineveh, this great city, which contains within her walls so many tens of thousands of human beings?"

Never has the mind of man conceived, nor the uninspired pen recorded, anything that conveys so forcible an illustration of the loving-kindness, the mercy, and the compassion of the Lord as these verses, transcendently beautiful in their simplicity, which have just been quoted. In them we at once recognize the leading feature of the Day of Atonement; they fill our hearts with sentiments of gratitude and love, and they inspire us with confidence and hope, whilst they rivet our attention to that gracious declaration of Scripture which we repeat so often to-day, יי יי אל רחום וחנון "The Lord! The Lord! God most merciful and compassionate."[1]

Before we proceed to address our thoughts to the mercy of the Deity, that perfection which is so gloriously displayed in the passage of the text, the order

[1] Exodus xxxiv. 6.

of the narrative of Jonah demands that we briefly consider what stands out in melancholy contrast to the benign attribute of God, and that is, the weaknesses and the evil passions of man. Jonah appears before us invested with the sacred authority of a Prophet, but at the same time exhibiting much of that obduracy and pride which are so deeply seated in the human heart. He receives a divine mission to Nineveh, where he is charged to denounce the inhabitants, and to publish a decree of the severest visitation upon the entire city, to take effect after the expiration of forty days. From the moment when Jonah announces this prophecy, he appears to be in a constant state of apprehension lest it should fail to be accomplished, not so much on account of his fervid zeal for the Word of God, as on account of his own pride and personal consequence, the former of which, he supposed, might be wounded, and the latter materially weakened, if divine mercy should be aroused and should interpose to prevent the fulfilment of the oracle which he, an accredited Prophet, had been charged to declare. So powerfully did this morbid sensibility influence Jonah's conduct, that he endeavoured to evade the sacred mission imposed upon him by escaping to Tarshish. We have this on his own confession: "I fled to Tarshish, because I knew that Thou art a gracious and a compassionate God, long-suffering and infinite in mercy, and that Thou art moved to put away the threatened evil."[2] He is however obliged to discharge his appointed duty. Nineveh is denounced, and the total destruction of

[2] Jonah iv. 2.

the city is prophesied. But such ample atonement (the nature of which will be presently considered) is made by the people of Nineveh for their iniquitous practices, that God, faithful to the attributes which He revealed to Moses, pardons their sins, and recalls the punishment with which He had threatened them.

The very case which gave Jonah such grounds for alarm has now occurred; the Lord's mercy has prevailed, and the mission of the Prophet, having worked the gracious purpose of Him that gave it, is ended. But Jonah does not depart far from Nineveh, though he withdraws from within its walls: he is such a slave to human weakness, that he cannot bring himself to quit the place where he fancies that his renown has been blighted, but he lingers about the neighbourhood, and finally builds for himself a little booth, east of the walls, and there he abides עד אשר יראה מה יהיה בעיר "Until he can see what is to happen to the city."[3] Now this conduct discovers on the part of Jonah a wayward disposition and a most unbending spirit; and there can be little doubt as to the course which would be pursued by a mortal master or ruler who might be placed with regard to his servant in the same relation in which the chapter of our text represents the Almighty to stand to His obstinate and sullen messenger. But, brethren, the inspired book which we are now considering, treats not of a fallible and weak ruler, whose anger is fiercely kindled by the slightest deviation from his will, and who is more ready to chastise than to reclaim; but of God, whose mercy and loving-kindness are inexhaustible—

[3] Jonah iv. 5.

of God, who has compassion for the frailties of His children, and who does not fail to remember that they are but dust. With a Father's love and a Father's pity, He looks down upon His perverse and erring child Jonah, and He determines to recall him to a sense of filial duty in the same way, brethren, as He would recall us to-day from our transgressions, by moral means and by the accents of love. He wills, and in a single night a tall creeping plant, with broad-shading leaves, springs up to shelter Jonah from a scorching sun, and great is the comfort which the Prophet has in the shade afforded him by the creeping plant. But, alas! the delight which mortals find in outward things is transitory and perishable, and so the joy of one day is changed into grief on the morrow, when Jonah discovers that the plant which refreshed him by its shade, has withered at the touch of a simple worm. His spirit is broken, and he prays to God to remove him from a world where he is only to experience disappointment and sorrow. And now, my hearers, we have the whole moral of the book of Jonah in the sense of the gracious and loving words which the Lord returns to the petition of His wayward servant: "O Jonah! thy pity has been excited for a simple vegetable plant, which thou didst not create, which thou didst not rear; and yet thou dost abandon thyself to grief and despair, because I the Lord, the ever watchful and tender parent of man, have been moved to compassion for many thousands of human beings, created by my hand, and quickened by my immortal Spirit."

From what has been advanced, it will be perceived that the chapter of our text brings us good tidings:

it tells us that mercy is the prominent jewel in the moral crown of Deity, and that in this benign attribute we must seek the primary cause of the Day of Atonement which our Almighty Father in heaven has appointed for a perpetual ordinance in Israel. In mercy the Lord now summons us into His awful presence, in mercy will He judge us, and "as a shepherd seeketh out his flock on the day when he is amongst his scattered sheep,"[4] so doth the Lord this day seek for every straying lamb to conduct him back to the fold, calling to us in the voice of a Parent, שלום שלום לרחוק ולקרוב "Peace to him that is near, peace to him that is afar off."[5] O brethren, if we have hearts of flesh and not of stone, we can hardly fail to be sensibly moved by the affectionate summons of our God, who desires not to inspire us with sentiments of fear, but to fill us with pious gratitude and with filial love. It is our Redeemer, our truest benefactor who calls to us, and who suppresses the many accusations which He might lay against the best amongst us, in the plenitude of His merciful desire to bring us back to His forgiveness. Gracious Lord and preserver of man! from the depths of the heart we implore Thee to subdue our pride and to curb our evil inclinations, so that we turn not away impenitently from the boon which Thou dost this day hold forth to us; but that we grasp at once the hand of mercy and grace now extended to every one who is truly contrite for his past iniquities.

Though we may have sinned ever so grievously against the laws and precepts of our God, He will not

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[4] Ezekiel xxxiv. 12. [5] Isaiah lvii. 19.

upbraid us for any transgression which we have committed, nor will He record it against us, provided that we now return to Him penitently and sincerely. I speak not this, brethren, from mere inference, but on the authority of God's holy word, which is plainly revealed through the Prophet Ezekiel. "When the wicked turneth away from all his sins which he hath committed, and keepeth My statutes, and executeth judgment and righteousness, he shall live and not perish; none of his transgressions which he hath done shall be remembered unto him, in the righteousness which he doeth he shall live."[6] If then, there be within us enough of virtue and faith to bring our hearts to the confession of our iniquities, and our minds to the fixed determination of future amendment, we justify the Lord in righteousness, and our atonement is made on the grounds of our scripturally admitted claims to Divine forgiveness.

Such, dear brethren, is our blessed Jewish teaching, attested again and again by the plain unequivocal declarations of the Bible. In the doctrines and lessons bequeathed to us by Moses and the Prophets, we can discover nothing of the gloomy tenet which sprang up in later times, that God's justice demands a *particular satisfaction* for sin, and exacts the full penalty in the form of a vicarious sacrifice. Agreeably

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[6] Ezekiel xviii. 21, 22. "Repentance makes atonement for all transgressions. If a man have done wickedly all his life, and if he finally repent, no portion of his evil doing will be recorded against him; for it is said, 'the wicked man shall not fall by reason of his wickedness on the day when he turneth away from his iniquities.'" (Maimonides, Hilchoth Teshuba i. 3).

to the teachings of the Scriptures, as they strike the Jewish mind, the only essential atonement, which our beneficent and merciful Father requires for transgression, is repentance made manifest by unconditional and immediate amendment.[7] This atonement offered, we should hold it at variance with biblical doctrine to urge the necessity of punishment *to satisfy the justice of God*, since nothing can be plainer than the instruction set forth in the passage of the text, that the Lord withheld the rod of chastisement from falling on the people of Nineveh, because of the sincere repentance which they had made.

But it well behoves us, my hearers, to satisfy ourselves that we manifest *genuine* repentance for our sins; and this brings us to the consideration of the important question started in the exordium of the present sermon, whether the efficacy of our atonement is consequent upon the outward worship in which we are joining to-day, or upon our proper sentiments of internal religion. In order to make this enquiry, it is not necessary to ransack the whole volume of Scripture, nor to refer from page to page, since we shall

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[7] ומה היא התשובה הוא שיעזב החוטא חטאו ויסירו ממחשבתו וינמוד בלבו שלא יעשהו עוד. "True penitence consists in this, that the sinner forsake his sin, and put it away from his mind, and that he sincerely resolve not to commit it again" (Maimonides, Hilchoth Teshuba ii. 2).

בעלי חטאות ואשמות בעת שמביאין קרבנותיהן על שננתן או על זדונן אין מתכפר להן בקרבנם עד שיעשו תשובה ויתודו וידוי דברים

"They who brought sin-offerings and trespass-offerings on account of transgressions which they might have committed inadvertently or presumptuously, could not make their atonement by means of these offerings, until they became penitent, and made a full confession [of their iniquities]" (Ibid. i. 1).

obtain all the information that we can reasonably require within the limits of the prophetical book from which our present text is taken; indeed, we may confine ourselves to the few verses which comprise the third chapter of Jonah.

The messenger of the Most High does his awful bidding, and the word of the Lord falls upon the whole city of Nineveh. And what are the effects of the divine message? All the inhabitants of the city, from the monarch on his throne to the slave in the labour mart, are awed by the Prophet's words, and are at once awakened to a sense of their sinful state. The business of every-day life appears to be suspended for a season, whilst the people retire, as it were, from the outward world to betake themselves to serious meditation. To a certain extent, brethren, our conduct to-day resembles theirs, for we also have closed the door upon the world, we have not suffered its agitating cares to press upon our thoughts, nor have we permitted the ordinary business of life or our love of gain to call off our attention from God, Judgment and Eternity. But let us be wary lest we attach an undue importance to this abstraction and self-communion, and lest we regard the means more than the end; for we have only to refer to the book before us in order to discover that serious reflection, how commendable soever it be, is of itself no atonement for sin, and so, the Lord does not yet answer the people of Nineveh. Again, they put sackcloth on their loins and sit in ashes, acts which if they possess any value at all in the sight of God, must transcend by far any bodily mortifications to which we subject ourselves to-day, and yet the Lord answers them not. Moreover, a

general fast is proclaimed, and is most rigidly observed; and here again we trace a resemblance between the outward worship of the people of Nineveh and that of ourselves. Now as it is not improbable that many of us are disposed to rely, more than Scripture warrants, on the fact that from sun-set yesterday no food or moisture has passed our lips, it may be well for us to note from the narrative before us that a day's abstinence and self-denial is insufficient to purchase for us a reconciliation with the just and holy God, against whom we have sinned, since notwithstanding the rigid fast kept by the Babylonians, the Lord answers them not. But do not the people mentioned in our text pray? Yes, my hearers, to quote the words of the sacred historian, ויקראו אל אלהים בחזקה "they call upon God vehemently;"[8] but for all this לא שב אפו ועוד ידו נטויה "His displeasure is not removed, but His hand is still stretched out."[9] Though prayer be an act of devotion and homage, it maketh not of itself an atonement for sin, and again the Lord returneth no answer to the men of Nineveh. Let us not pass by this incident recorded in the inspired narrative, without heeding well the instruction which it conveys. Though we should employ this day from sun-rise to sun-set in supplication and prayer, we h ould still be far from having made our atonement, and obtained forgiveness for our sins. The Lord looks to our hearts, to our thoughts, to our intentions, and heeds not the mere words, which, alas! we too often utter mechanically and without holy fervour.

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[8] Jonah iii. 8 [9] Isaiah ix. 21.

But "is there then no balm in Gilead?"[10] Is there no salvation for the sinful people of Nineveh? They have betaken themselves to serious meditation; they have covered themselves with sackcloth and lain in dust and ashes; they have fasted and prayed: what should they further do in order to make their penitence manifest before God? The answer is furnished in the chapter before us. They must honestly determine to sin designedly no more, and they must prove their sincerity by departing at once from their evil ways. The transgressors of Nineveh feel that this is the only road to the mercy and favour of God, and they resolve to pursue it. Mark well, my hearers, what follows. Now, and not till now, is their penitence acknowledged by the Great Searcher of all hearts: now He accounts to them the benefit of their retirement for a while from the outward world to serious and devout meditation; now He accepts their fast; now He receives their prayers. They have made their atonement: ויגבה יי צבאות במשפט והאל הקדוש נקדש בצדקה "The Lord of Hosts is exalted in judgment, and the Holy God is sanctified in righteousness,"[11] and His hand is put forth to receive back to His forgiveness and to His love His truly penitent children.

With this striking and comprehensive lesson before us, brethren, our course this day is most clear. Like the people of Nineveh it behoves us well to seek religious retirement, and to ponder on our ways, and like them it becomes us to humble ourselves by abstinence and mortification, to confess our iniquities

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[10] Jeremiah viii. 22. [11] Isaiah v. 16.

and to pray earnestly and devoutly to our Father in heaven. In the sequel of their history however we must remember above all things this significant and momentous truth, that our reconciliation with God does not depend upon the discharge of any one of the above mentioned rites, nor of all of them combined; but upon the truthfulness with which we make acknowledgment of our transgressions, and the sincerity with which we abandon them. The book of our text tells us וירא אלהים את מעשיהם "that God beheld the actions of the people of Nineveh;" when they clothed themselves in sackcloth and sat in ashes? No. When they observed a rigid fast? No. When they called vehemently upon Him in prayer? Again no: but כי שבו מדרכם הרעה "when they turned aside from their evil ways."[12]*

I have now endeavored, brethren, to place clearly before you the two leading principles of the Day of Atonement, which indeed embody the whole essence of that sacred institution—the inexhaustible mercy of God, and the means by which we can secure for ourselves the gracious boon which is freely offered to us. Now whilst we prostrate ourselves in gratitude and love before Him who dealeth with us so leniently and so beneficently, we ought also freely to admit that nothing can be more just and reasonable

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[12] Jonah iii. 10.

* אחינו לא נאמר באנשי נינוה וירא אלהים את שקם ואת תעניתם אלא וירא האלהים את מעשיהם כי שבו מדרכם הרעה

"Brethren, it is not recorded of the men of Nineveh that God regarded their being attired in sack-cloth, or that He regarded their fast, but 'that God beheld their works, and that they abandoned their sinful course.'" (Mishna, Taanith ii. 1).

than the condition under which the divine forgiveness is offered to us. Can we expect that the omniscient Lord should receive the expressions of our lips when He knows that they are not confirmed by the sentiments of our hearts? Does it become us to declare in effect—for even thus runs the language of the heart of many amongst us—that we find it easier to fast than to obey His commandments: that we can pray with fluency, but cannot suppress the enmity which we bear against a brother who has offended us, cannot eradicate from our breasts the passion for slander and detraction: that we can pass an entire day once in the year in outward solemnities, but cannot observe the holy sabbath, and forego the worldly gain which may be acquired thereon? No, dear brethren, it were far better for us that we had remained at home, and had taken no part in the awful rites of the synagogue to day, than that we should for a moment indulge a thought like this, so pernicious to our souls, so insulting to the majesty of our Almighty Father.

Finally, let us fortify ourselves against the vain subterfuge, that though we cannot at present bring ourselves to forsake all our sins, the time is not far distant when we shall be enabled to accomplish fully this holy work.[13] Why shall we be better disposed

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[13] לעולם יראה אדם עצמו באילו הוא נוטה למות ושמא ימות בשעתו ינמצא עומד בחטאו לפיכך ישוב מחטאיו מיד ולא יאמר כשאזקין אשיב שמא ומות טרם שיזקין הוא ששלמה אמר בחכמתו בכל עת יהיו בגדיך לבנים·

"Man should ever regard himself as if his death were near at hand; and since he may be called to his account at any hour, and

to make our peace with God, and to commence a pious life, next year than we are now? Will the Bible be more true, will the word of inspiration be more sure, and will God's promises be more faithful a year hence than they are to day? Do we really imagine that we shall discover in the next Day of Atonement, if we live to see it, circumstances better calculated to urge us to repentance and amendment than we perceive at this hour? Of all the delusions into which we are betrayed, this is perhaps the least pardonable, as it assuredly is the most fatal. Can we as reasonable men and women seriously believe, that if we fail to reconcile ourselves to God to-day when we are withdrawn from the world, its intoxicating pleasures and strong temptations; to-day when our minds are awakened to a sense of religion and of its infinite obligations; to-day when our sins are brought to remembrance, when the especial service in which we join reminds us that our years are few, that life hangs suspended by a single thread, which any of the thousand accidents to which we are hourly exposed may snap asunder—can we seriously believe that if these considerations are insufficient to induce us to return penitently and sincerely to our heavenly Father, we shall be better prepared to do so when we shall have quitted the house of worship, when we shall hear no voice to admonish us of our sins, when many of us shall be again engrossed in commerce and

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whilst indulging in his sins, he ought to abandon his iniquities forthwith; let him not say I will repent when I am old, for may he not die before old age comes? Solomon has therefore wisely said, 'let thy garments be always white.'" (Maim. Hilch. Tesh. vii. 2).

in the pursuit of wealth, and when the good impressions which the Lord may have permitted the synagogue to make this day upon our hearts, will not only be weakened, but in all probability completely effaced?

For the love of God, for the salvation of our souls, let us put away this self-deception and folly. We talk of conquering in old age many sins which in youth and lusty manhood we find it difficult even to bring under a temporary restraint. But I pray you, brethren, do we act upon this principle in the ordinary concerns of life? When we meet with a youth of ill-temper and violent passion, do we conclude that he must be indulged in these infirmities for an indefinite time, because his moral malady can be more successfully treated in old age than in boyhood? Is it our practice to argue that he who is disposed to avarice and selfishness in his youth, and uses no effort to emancipate himself from their trammels, will in His more advanced years become generous and noble-hearted? No: the experience which we daily acquire would at once satisfy us of the absurdity of cherishing such unreasonable expectations. If then we go on from יום הכפורים to יום הכפורים professing amendment and yet taking no means for carrying it into effect, it is certain that we shall die as we have lived, and that we shall go to our account with all our iniquities upon our heads. A sin committed once or twice entails remorse and makes the conscience ill at ease; but let that sin be oft repeated and little or no compunction will be felt. We may apply the same axiom to ourselves; if to day our hearts be inaccessible to the voice of God, it must be evident that next year—if even the Lord should spare

us alive—time and habit will have hardened us more, the service which moves us to day a little, will next year affect us less, and so we shall trifle away our time until we make our beds in the grave.

If the arguments which have been deduced to day from the instructive passage of our text shall have prevailed upon us to weigh well the awful responsibility of deferring our repentance, let us not, I pray you, discharge this thought from our minds before we take into account an important and mysterious question. Shall you or I, brethren, be permitted to pass in the synagogue another Day of Atonement? Into the secrets of the future no mortal can penetrate; but He in whose hand are life and death, infallibly knoweth how many of us here to day who promise unto ourselves a long succession of years and ample time for repentance, will be sleeping in the dust before the anniversary of the sacred יום הכפורים shall come round again. Let me then most earnestly implore Him who controls our destinies to save us from an impenitent death. Say ye "Amen" to that prayer, my fellow worshippers? O then, be prevailed upon to make this day your own and to secure its blessings. Come, let us "seek the Lord whilst he may be found, let us call upon Him whilst He is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the sinful man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord who will receive him in mercy."[14] Let our monitor be the Day of Atonement, and not the despairing looks and the tearful eyes of our parents or of our children, which will acquaint us that our final hour is at hand.

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[14] Isaiah lv. 6. 7.

To day let us balance sincere and free repentance excited by filial and pious love—repentance manifested in the prime and vigour of our lives, against that repentance which will be forced from us by fear and sad apprehension[15]—and our determination can hardly become a matter of doubt.

O Lord! assist us in our meditations, suffer us not to be overpowered by the tyranny of our passions; but remember "we are the clay and Thou art our Former." Gracious Father! call Thou once more unto us in Thy accents of love, "Return, O erring children," and in the heart of every one of us do Thou place a tongue that shall reply with sincerity, הננו אתנו לך כי אתה יי אלהינו "Here we are; we come to Thee, for Thou art the Lord our God."[16]

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[15] "It is unworthy of man to serve God merely from fear; whoever serves Him from this motive will be very far from arriving at the degree of piety which the prophets and the sages attained. None but vulgar-minded and uneducated persons serve God from motives of fear." (Maim. Hilch. Tesh. x. 1).

[16] Jeremiah iii. 22.

## XXIV.

## THE DAY OF ATONEMENT THE IMAGE OF THE DAY OF OUR DEATH.

*Preached on the Afternoon of the Day of Atonement*, 5611 (*Sept.* 16, 1850).

"Make me to know, O Lord, my end, and what is the measure of my days, so that I may know what a frail creature I am. Behold, Thou hast measured my days by a hand's-breadth, and my whole career is as nothing before Thee; surely every man, how stable soever he may appear, is but vanity. Verily man passeth away like a shadow: he maketh an empty noise, he gathereth riches, and he knoweth not for whom he storeth them up. And now what have I to expect? O Lord, my hope is in Thee.—Psalm xxxix. 5, 6, 7, 8.

To Thee, all-gracious and merciful Father! blessed and exalted be Thy name from now and evermore—to Thee be ascribed honour, glory, and praise! It is Thou "who givest strength to the weak,"[1] and sustainest us Thy children far beyond our merits, so that we are once more enabled to occupy our minds with serious reflections, suitable to the character of this sacred day.

Beloved brethren, the day wears, the awful rites of יום הכפורים (the Day of Atonement) are drawing to a close, and we are about to pronounce for the last time the וידוי (confession) and the תהנה (supplica-

[1] Isaiah xl. 29.

tion) in the service of the נעילה. The voice of our Heavenly Parent has issued the decree for the present holy convocation, and He has vouchsafed to crown with His benediction the Day of Atonement, so as to render it to us not only a day of prayer, but also of profound meditation. It would indeed be difficult for us to resist the impulse of serious thought on an occasion like this, when we have drawn a curtain before us to shut out from our gaze the external world, its turmoil and its strife, when we have placed, as it were, a bridle on our inordinate desires, and when the throbbings of unruly passions have for a time been stilled within us. We are now in the proper frame of mind for deep religious meditation: our strength is brought low, our pride is mortified, our rebellious spirit is calmed by submission, and the arm of flesh, in which we are wont to place too much reliance, is weakened by reason of our fast. Shall we realize many of these sensations in a far greater degree at a future time, though probably not on the anniversary of the Day of Atonement? Yes, yes, beloved hearers; there will come a day for us all, for the pastor as well as the flock, when we shall be more weary and faint than we now are, when our senses will be languid, and all our powers prostrated; when "the grasshopper shall be a burden and desire shall be extinguished, כי הלך האדם אל בית עלמו because man goeth to his everlasting home; . . . . when the silver cord shall be snapped asunder, when the golden bowl shall be shattered, when the pitcher shall be broken at the fountain, and the wheel shall fall into the cistern; and when the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall go back unto

God who gave it."[2] The words here quoted clearly point to our last day upon the earth, a solemn time on which it behoves us all to have our thoughts at the present hour firmly rivetted, for I shall endeavour to show presently that the Day of Atonement is to be regarded by every Israelite as the image of the day of his death.

Scripture does not inform us on what occasion and under what circumstances David composed the soul-stirring 39th Psalm, from which the text for this afternoon is taken; but it is not improbable that the grave sentiments which it contains were suggested to his mind on the solemnization of the יום הכפורים, when he kneeled before the sanctuary, and imbibed the impressive lessons on the vanity of the world, and the rapid flight of man's earthly life—truths which the awful rites performed by the High Priest were so especially calculated to teach. The Psalmist gives us a short but descriptive account of the intense effect produced in him by these sentiments. He could neither speak nor pray;[3] but he gave himself up to serious thought on his relation to God and to eternity, on the few years he would be permitted to live upon the earth, and on the preparation he would be required to make for a future state. But did he put away these reflections, as many of us would do as soon as they arise in our minds? No, my hearers, long and earnestly did he ponder on the great truths until, as he himself tells us, חם לבי בקרבי בהגיגי תבער אש "My heart burned within me, a fire devoured me whilst I was meditating."[4] He at last finds relief for his overburdened heart in the

[2] Ecclesiastes xii. 5, 6, 7. [3] נאלמתי דומיה [4] ver. 4.

language of prayer, when he pours forth the sublime passage of the text, "Make me to know, O Lord, my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may become convinced how frail a creature I am. Behold Thou hast measured my days by a hand's breadth, and my whole career is as nothing before Thee; surely every man, how stable soever he may appear, is but vanity. Verily man passes away like a shadow; he makes an empty noise, he gathers riches, and he knows not for whom he stores them up. And now what have I to expect? O Lord, my hope is in Thee."

To attempt to add a single word in the way of commentary or amplification to this outburst of heart-felt prayer would only impair, if anything could impair, its native force. Nor does it need any addition from the pen of uninspired man, since it at once makes its way to the soul, convinces the understanding, and effectually removes the bandage which many of us place over our eyes, so that we may not have occasion to contemplate our mortal end. Moreover, the passage of the text recommends itself as a form of supplication which we might all do well to put up on each day of our lives; and if there be one occasion more than another, when it is especially incumbent upon us to join in the prayer of the Psalmist, and to bring to bear all our powers of reflection on the solemn truths which it contains, it must be on this day, brethren, when we are here לכפר על נפשתינו לפני יי "to make an atonement for our souls before the Lord,"[5] and to prepare ourselves to meet our holy and righteous Father in judgment.

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[5] Numbers xxxi. 50.

"Make me to know, O Lord! my end and the measure of my days." Why should the Psalmist pray to be constantly kept in mind of a fact which even children must know? Is there to be found under the sun any thinking being who is not perfectly aware, that as natural as it is to be born, so natural is it to die, or who is not fully convinced, not merely from what he hears, but also from what daily experience teaches him, that the course of human life is rapid and the period of its duration uncertain? Yes, brethren, we know all this full well in theory, but we heed it little in the practices of our lives, since too many of us think and act as though it were a theory and nothing more. We not only fail to take the proper means for bringing to our remembrance the serious fact that we must die, but we do not even like to be reminded that we are mortal; and there are to be found some men who have such a morbid fear of death, that they hardly dare trust themselves to accompany the remains of a relative or friend to their final resting-place, lest it should leave upon their minds too enduring an impression of God's irreversible decree, עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." [6]

We need not stop to enquire to what cause or causes our habitual indisposition to ponder on the momentous facts that man's years are few and fleeting, and that the hour of death is uncertain, is to be ascribed; but it is most earnestly to be hoped that to-day we may all be prepared to overcome this repugnance, or we shall assuredly fail to derive from the gracious institution of

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[6] Genesis iii. 19.

the יום הכפורים, the spiritual advantages which it is intended to confer upon every son and daughter of the house of Israel. I have already said, that the Day of Atonement is to be regarded as the image of our last day upon the earth, and no stronger voucher needs be put forth on behalf of this assertion than that which is found in the spirit and in the letter of the entire liturgy appointed to be read on the יום הכפורים. It can hardly have escaped the notice of any worshipper that in the ערבית (inaugural service) recited last evening, in the שחרית (morning service) and the מוסף (additional service) read to-day, and most especially in the נעילה (concluding service) with which our Atonement prayers and supplications will presently terminate, are found the confessions of the dying, as well as the passages containing the awful truths to be pronounced by the Minister or by him who is watching near the mortal couch, when the soul of a departing Israelite is about to wing its flight to the realms of eternity. Now let it not be supposed, brethren, that the similarity which we discover between a portion of each service of the Day of Atonement and the prayers and confessions that proceed from the lips of the dying Jew, is a mere matter of accident. The case is very different. Our wise and pious ancestors who composed these formularies of prayer had their thoughts fully bent on the great religious dogma to which the sacred Day of Atonement directly points—that the Lord will not put away sin for which the atonement of sincere repentance has not been made. "Those who were sentenced to death by the Beth-din, or who were sentenced to be scourged, did not make atonement by their death or by their corporal punish-

ment, unless they repented and made confession" (Yod Hachazaka. Hilchoth Teshuba. i. 3); "The Day of *Kippur* and death make atonement, provided the sinner be penitent (Mishna Yomah. viii. 8).[7] Now as melancholy experience had impressed our ancient fathers with the conviction that speech, and sight, and even reason itself do not unfrequently desert the dying man long before the pulse of vitality ceases to throb, they deemed it an imperative duty to blend the service which is recited at our mortal hour with the penitential liturgy of this day, so that every Jewish worshipper might have the opportunity afforded to him of making his peace with God on the יום הכפורים, as though it were his final day upon the earth, and of guarding himself against an unexpected summons, like that conveyed by the Prophet Isaiah to the king of Judah, which might find him unprepared to meet the Lord in eternal judgment.

The Day of Atonement is mercifully appointed to wean us from temptation, to induce us to sacrifice every unhallowed desire at the shrine of religion, to cleanse us from our iniquities, and so to attune our hearts to prayer that our supplications may be met by the gracious reply from the throne of the Almighty: "I have blotted out thy transgressions as a cloud, and as a thick cloud thy sins: come back unto me, for I have redeemed thee."[8] Now if we take this to mind, and at the same time reflect that when

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[7] כל מחוייבי מיתות בית דין ומחוייבי מלקות אין מתכפר להן במיתתן או בקלקייתן עד שיעשו תשובה ויתודו (יד החזקה · הלכות תשובה פרק א׳ ג׳) מיתה ויום הכפורים מכפרין עם התשובה (משנה יומא פרק ח׳ ח׳)

[8] Isaiah xliv. 22.

the hour for our departure from the earth arrives, we shall desire nothing more earnestly than that the good effects which the יום הכפורים is intended to operate, may have been produced in us, and that our spirits may be cheered by the accents of divine consolation and hope—we shall not be at loss to discover why the Day of Atonement should have been regarded by all pious Jews as the image of the day of their death. As often as the anniversary of this sacred institution came round, so often did our ancestors learn a salutary lesson how to die; and that this important instruction might be the more indelibly impressed on their minds during the Day of Atonement, they instituted the practice, at a period so remote that its origin cannot now with certainty be traced, to repair to their cemeteries a few hours prior to the inauguration of the fast,[9] and to meditate near the ashes of their beloved ones on the comparative nothingness of human life which a breath might extinguish. Here, secluded as it were from the busy world, and no longer deceived by the tinsel with which it is decked out, and the flattering expectations which it excites, they truly read the history of mortals in the forcible words of our text: "Man's days are measured by a hand's breadth; his entire career is as nothing; he passes away like a shadow; he makes an empty noise, he gathers riches, and knows not for whom he hoards them up;" and here they feelingly participated in the sentiments of David, exclaiming, "And now what have I to expect? O Lord! my hope is in Thee." And, brethren, these were not idle reflections, to be discharged from the mind

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9 יש מקומות שנוהגין לילך על הקברות (אורח חיים תר"א א')

as quickly as they were imbibed, nor were they without their practical effects: before our fathers proceeded to the Synagogue to join in the service of the Day of Atonement—the image of the day of death—they sought out every neighbour whom they might have injured to make him full reparation, him whom they might have offended to solicit his forgiveness,[10] and him against whom they had borne enmity for wrongs inflicted to hold out to him the hand of reconciliation; and thus, at peace with man, they proceeded to present their Atonement offering of sincere repentance, to make their peace with God, and to prepare themselves to die.

Say, brethren, are we to look upon those ancient customs as superstitious or as approximating to asceticism? Far, far from us be such a thought! They bear faithful evidence of the spirit of the holy day on which we are assembled; and as far as they go, they bring us to recognise the merciful dispensation of Providence, that we are forbidden to pass our years as though we were in a constant dream; that we are to be made to feel by means of the solemnities of the Day of Atonement, that we are not what the promptings of pride whisper, and what the adulation of our fellow-creatures is ever ready to proclaim us to be; but that we are what our text declares, "frail creatures, whose days are measured by a hand's breadth," in other words, that "we are dust, and unto dust we must return."

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[10] עברות שבין אדם לחברו אין יום הכפורים מכפר עד שירצה את חברו (משנה יומא פרק ח׳ ט׳)

The *Yom Kippur* does not atone for any sin which a man may have committed against his neighbour, until the sinner has appeased the neighbour whom he has wronged (Mishna Yoma 8. 9).

If there be any amongst us, who may be disposed to ask whether we indeed require to have these antiquated truisms rehearsed to us, and whether we stand in need of the monitions of the text in order to induce us to solemnize the יום הכפורים in the plenitude of its sacred spirit, let us endeavour to determine this question by means of our own experience and of the recollection of the conduct which we are wont to pursue. Since the establishment of our congregation, I believe that this is the ninth יום הכפורים on which we have met together to make our Atonement before the Lord; and as each celebration of the day has registered a year on the dial of time past, we are reminded that nine years of our lives—O what an important section of the brief space of time allotted to us!—have passed away from our grasp. Externally, this period has wrought much, and has told its tale upon every congregant; but, dear brethren, what has it worked for our inner life? Has it purified us from the defilement of sin? Has it witnessed the accomplishment of the many promises which we have solemnly registered before God from one יום הכפורים to another? In fine, has it improved our moral state? As every heart has its own secrets, all that can be expected is, that we should return an answer to satisfy our own consciences. Now if our Atonement services have produced in us all this good, or even a considerable portion of it, we need be under no sad apprehensions when we are reminded in the words of the Psalmist, "that our days are measured by a hand's breadth, and that our whole life is like a shadow." But if there be amongst us, brethren, those to whom nine days of atonement have proved so many moral

blanks, and who have not earnestly striven to remove themselves from the path of iniquity, to repent of their misdeeds, and to make their peace with God, they cannot reasonably deny that they stand in extreme need of having the grave truths of the text rehearsed to them, so that they may be warned in the words of the Prophet, not to continue to "draw out iniquity as a long cable,"[11] and so that they may be duly cautioned not to close their ears and alienate their hearts, when they are this day affectionately exhorted by the gracious Parent of mankind to come back penitently unto Him against whom they have sinned.

It is not surely assuming too much, when I assert on your behalf, brethren, and on mine own, that we all sincerely hope to make our peace with God, before we are called to final judgment. I may even go further—that we desire to effect this important object on the present day. The conclusion is inevitable; or why are we met here? Now what are the obstacles which stand in our way? Let the Holy Prophet of Judah answer our question. "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have caused Him to hide His face from you, so that He does not regard you."[12] We must remove this wall, this stumbling-block, these sins, or we might as well have remained at home and have laboured at our worldly vocations, for the moral work which we come here to perform will not be accomplished. It is not for me, sinner as I myself am before the Lord, to question any man concerning the particular transgressions which separate him to-day

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[11] Isaiah v. 18. [12] Isaiah lix. 2.

from the Almighty; but I may reasonably infer that there are two especial sins, which attach more or less to all of us, and which prevent us from converting this merciful יום הכפורים into a spiritual blessing.

The first is our stiff-neckedness induced by Pride, which closes all the avenues to our hearts against the affectionate appeals which the Lord now makes to us to forsake our evil ways. We know that we are culpable, we know that our merciful Father admonishes us for our real and permanent benefit; but we cannot, or rather we will not, bend our proud spirits to His Supreme will. But say, brethren, shall we continue to persevere in this impious warfare, and measure our strength against the omnipotence of the Lord, when we read in the text a faithful description of our end? Shall we whose "days are meted out by a hand's breadth, whose whole career is as nothing, and who pass away like a shadow" contend with our Maker, our Sovereign, and our Judge? Shall we who are but clay in the hands of the potter,[13] be proud and obdurate? No, no, brethren, let us ponder on our ways, let us think on our end, which this holy day prefigures; and let us prostrate ourselves at the footstool of the Lord, thanking Him from the depths of our hearts, for reminding us through His inspired Psalmist of what we really are, and let us make our peace with our supremely righteous Father, and obtain His forgiveness before the sun goeth down.

Our second predominant sin is Cupidity. God has given us of "the dew of Heaven and of the fatness of the earth," and has enabled us to obtain all that is

[13] Jeremiah xviii. 6.

necessary for contentment and happiness, by means of our industry, our talents, our enterprise, and our prudent management. But, alas! our covetousness knows no bounds, and in our desire to obtain wealth, we occasionally sin against many of the Divine laws, and, in some instances, we openly violate the fourth great commandment—Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Now as the doctrine put forth by the Prophet in the Haphtarah (prophetical portion) appointed to be read on the morning of כִּפּוּר—that in order to make our fast acceptable, we must hallow the seventh day—is too plain to admit of a second interpretation, we have sought to ease our consciences of a burden by persuading ourselves that we here sin from necessity and not choice; and perhaps there be some who may have resolved, that if it should please the Lord to spare them for a year or two, they would forsake their sin, and no longer suffer the heinous transgression of Sabbath-breaking to interpose between them and the acceptance of their Atonement offering. If some have carried this pious resolution into effect, there are unhappily others who have failed to do so, and the latter might reasonably be asked whether they have not by this time seen the iniquity and the folly of their course? Do they seriously believe, that if they can permit themselves to commit this sin from week to week for so many years, at the sacrifice of making their Atonement before God and of obtaining His forgiveness, the day will ever come when they shall be disposed to say, *We have enough?* Or do they imagine that the way to wean themselves from a particular sinful propensity is to give it more and more indulgence? When therefore

the momentous truths contained in the text are addressed to our hearts, we ought to question ourselves thus:—"For what am I perpetually striving, for what am I subjecting myself to the severe reprimands of conscience, for what am I sacrificing the greatest prize that humanity can obtain, that of making atonement for my soul before the Lord? Why, for the very things of which *my end*, so forcibly described by the Psalmist, will wholly deprive me! For gold I struggle and toil, for gold I give up the approval and the favor of my Creator, for gold I wreck my peace of mind; and yet the servant of God speaketh truly when he says, יצבר ולא ידע מי אספם 'Man amasseth riches, yet he knoweth not for whom he storeth them up.' But though I wot not who shall inherit nor to what purposes will be applied the riches, to obtain which I am making such fearful sacrifices, this I do know, that my days on the earth are measured by a hand's breath, and that I am passing away like a shadow." When we thus commune with ourselves, and when we view earthly riches by the faithful light reflected from the passage of our text, we ought not to hesitate for a moment to immolate our habitual sin of cupidity at the shrine of religion, and to make our peace with God before the sun goeth down.

And now, brethren, a serious word to us all. I go to pray for myself and my household, and for you, beloved congregants, and the members of your families, in the supplication of נעילה. At the close of this solemn service, and immediately prior to the sounding of the *Shophar*, we shall hear read some lines of awful import: and let us heed them well, since they contain the self-same words which will fall upon our ears when the

separation is about to take place between our body and our spirit. Brethren, as at our last day upon the earth we shall view external things in a far different light from that in which we regard them in the season of health and vigour and worldly prosperity; so let us pray of God, that when the image of our death is presented to us in the close of this Day of Atonement, we may be disposed to estimate our inner and our outward life as if we were lying on our mortal couch. As when we hear the thrilling sounds of the שמע on our last day, we shall earnestly desire to cheer our souls with the reflection that we have walked in the light of the Lord, and performed His holy will, that we have been good parents and children, faithful husbands and wives, generous friends to the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the stranger, earnest supporters of the Synagogue, the school-house, the dispensary, and the hospital, and that we have dealt out benevolence in proportion to the means which we possessed; so let the conclusion of the נעילה this evening find us fully and sincerely determined to practise all these Jewish duties from now to the last day of our lives. And, brethren, if we shall take upon ourselves those pious resolutions, and faithfully carry them into effect, we shall indeed have cause to rejoice in the present יום הכפורים, which has brought back the strayed sheep of the house of Israel, unto God our merciful Shepherd, our gracious and loving Father. We may then send up an universal Hallelujah to the Lord, who at the close of our Atonement service will greet us in the cheering words of Holy Writ; לך אכל בשמחה לחמך ושתה בלב טוב יינך כי כבר רצה האלהים את מעשיך: "Go, eat thy

bread in joy, and drink thy wine with a cheerful heart, for God hath now accepted thy work." [14]

And now, gracious Father in heaven, suffer us to commune with Thee once more in prayer. Be with us at our going forth, as Thou hast been with us on our coming in, and permit not the good impressions, which Thou hast been pleased to make upon our hearts this day, to be effaced or weakened, when we shall again mingle in the business of the world. O Lord, pardon our sins! O Lord, remove far from us our transgressions! O Lord, accept our prayers and our fast, and account us worthy of Thy divine favour and love!

Bless unto us, O Lord, the year on which we have now entered, and may it prove unto us and unto all Israel a year of spiritual regeneration! Bless the fruit of the earth and the fruit of the womb, and satisfy us with Thy goodness! Be Thou a husband to the widow; be Thou a Father to the orphan; be Thou eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, health to the sick, consolation to the bereaved, and a gracious benefactor to us all!

To Thy merciful protection, O Lord, we commit ourselves, our wives, our children, our parents, and those whom we cherish with affection, during the current year: O spare and guard us, and preserve us for each other, for in Thee alone is help. Hold up our goings in Thy path, and suffer not our feet to stumble. Direct us with Thy counsel, and illumine our minds with Thy celestial light: vouchsafe to bestow upon us our daily bread, and dispose us to

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[14] Ecclesiastes ix. 7.

receive Thy gift with gratitude, and to enjoy it in contentment. And from this day and henceforward, be Thou with this congregation and with all Israel, and bless us, Almighty Father, even all of us together, in the light of Thy countenance.

Hear our voice, O Lord, our God! Have mercy and compassion upon us, and remember that we are but dust! Open Thou the gates of heaven to receive our supplications; and grant that this hour may be the hour of mercy and an acceptable time before Thee! Amen.

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